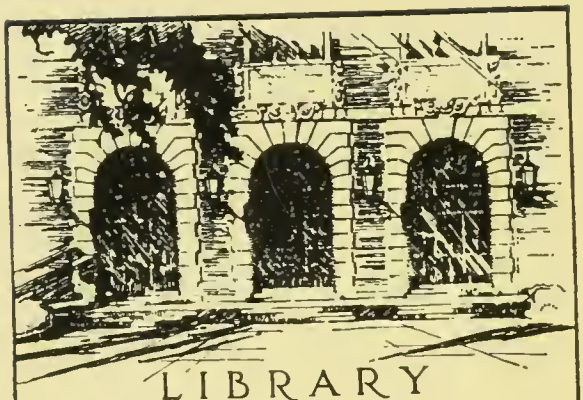

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# WOMAN'S DEVOTION.

## A NOVEL.

"I meant the day-star should not brighter ride,
Nor shed like influence from its lucent seat;
I meant she should be courteous, facile, sweet,
Free from that solemn vice of greatness—Pride;
I meant such softest virtue there should meet,
Fit in that softer bosom to abide;
My learned and a *manly* soul,
I purposed her; that should with even powers
The rock, the spindle and the shears controul
Of Destiny, and spin her own free hours."

BEN JONSON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN,
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.
1855.

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"WOMAN'S DEVOTION"

IS

Dedicated

TO

THE MEMORY OF A SISTER

WHOSE CHARACTER

IS FAINTLY PICTURED IN

"NEST."

# WOMAN'S DEVOTION.

## CHAPTER I.

It was a wild wintry day. The air was filled with the sound of warring elements, striving and battling with each other. The whistling wind swept over the earth in angry gusts, and, as it died moaning away in the distance, the dull sound of the heavy rain-cloud followed, as if sullenly determined to pour out its flood of waters undismayed by the wild freaks of its sister element.

But anon came the mad wind back again, and catching up in her rude and boisterous embrace the dark cloud with all its pattering spouts, sent it far away, the hollow booming sound of the sea breaking in upon the lull.

The salt spray came drifting up, after the rain drops, and the earth seemed to vibrate with the shock of resistless waves.

At length, as if tired with a strife in which each was victorious, and each vanquished, the wind and the rain made one last struggle. The former tore the trees in fury, and sent the scattered fragments off, in whirling violence, while the latter poured down a storm of hail, that whitened the earth in a few moments. It was their last effort, and exhausted by it, the wind went whimpering away, and the hail-cloud sailed majestically off, bearing in its train many smaller ones.

A tint of blue sky shone through them, a stray sun-beam peeped out for a moment, and then hurried back, as if to impart the intelli-

gence that the boisterous game of elements was over. For beam after beam appeared, until the sun shone forth in warm light.

Lovingly he gazed down upon his own image, reflected a million times in the sparkling raindrops, and as he gazed, he gathered them to his refulgent bosom.

The storm-beaten children of earth raised their battered heads, the birds ventured a feeble chirp, the cattle looked forth from their shelter ; and expanding with delight at the effect of his presence, broader and brighter grew the beams of the gracious sun.

Now human life began to show itself; for from beneath the low door of a mud hut appeared some figures, gazing at the sky, with evident satisfaction.

Placing some money in the hands of a poorly clad, but cleanly woman, a fine, well-made, handsome young man stepped forth, followed by another gentleman, and a man in the garb of a keeper. The latter carried two guns.

Obeying the direction of the woman in whose hut they seemed to have sheltered, they wound their way singly down a steep and narrow path.

"Come, West," said the first and younger of the two, "we have only to follow this path, and we shall arrive at the caverns; and not only will this be a grand day for them, but we may have a happy chance of some gulls."

"I call it no happy chance," said he of the name of West, "that prompted you to come out on such a day as this. I shall have rheumatism from head to heel, my nose will be red for a month, and I am utterly and entirely miserable at this moment. Come, Gomer, give up your wild scheme, and let us return home."

"Tut, man! you are not made of sugar or salt. What! within ten minutes' walk of these celebrated caverns, and give up? Not for worlds; besides, this is the very day for seeing

them — is it not, Tom ?" turning to the keeper.

"Yes, my lord," said Tom, "it will be a grand sight, even if we have no sport with the gulls."

"There, West, do you hear that? grumble no more, but come with alacrity, and see mighty Ocean asserting his independence over Mother Earth."

"Don't you feel the path shaking beneath us, my lord?" said the keeper: "the sea is far away underneath the ground here."

"Is it indeed! yes, I fancy I can hear it roaring in vast depth beneath us. Hark, West!"

"Good heavens!" said West, "what a dangerous spot. I shall go no farther;" and his handsome face contracted with fear.

"No fear, Sir John, no fear," said the keeper; "you'll see a grand sight, such as you never seed afore, I'll go bail."

With the utmost reluctance he continued

his way, expostulating still more strongly, as the path grew steeper and more narrow, and the roaring of the waves more distinct.

"Mind yourselves!" shouted the keeper, as a gust of wind came rushing by, threatening to hurl them down the narrow way, over the precipitous cliffs, into the boiling surge.

Gomer laughed gaily to himself, as, clinging to the rock, he looked up, and beheld his friend descending with infinite labour and fear, his countenance expressive both of fright and disgust. His beautiful black curls, all so well arranged and highly perfumed, were now blown about in rude confusion, his delicate boots were useless, not to say dangerous; and he clung to the keeper with an affectionate embrace, that amused Gomer, knowing how exquisitely sensitive his friend was regarding "vulgar contact."

Leaving him in the stout arms of Tom, Gomer continued his descent, with skill and agility, until he arrived at a broad platform,

from whence he gazed upon a scene so magnificent in its wild grandeur, that he forgot his friend, and every other thing, save the sight before him.

It seemed as if he stood upon an archway on the cliffs, under which the bounding waves rushed with resistless force; and roaring with fury, at this check to their speed, they dashed up into long, deep, dark caverns. There the eye could only catch glimpses of the white foam, as it bubbled and boiled round the pillars and archways that nature had formed in a mood of wondrous grandeur.

Ever and anon, two waves would furiously meet in the middle, entering in from different archways, and springing up at each other, with mighty force, would send water, spray, and foam an hundred feet into the air. As the eye became accustomed to the gloom of the caverns, it could trace various beautiful fantastic arches, curiously moulded pillars, vast halls, and quiet little corners, where the sea merely heaved to

and fro, preserving its dark green colour, in contrast to the boiling surge around it.

Amazed, awed, but in a dream of devout admiration, Gomer stood, heedless of the time, the falling spray, the showers of salt water that soaked his chesnut curls, and covered his short moustache with briny dew.

His friend's hand was on his arm, and he turned to obey the motion of his finger, for the voice of a trumpet could not have been distinguished in such an uproar of sound. The gathering rush of the great waves, the thundering roar with which they threw themselves on the rocks—the booming, hollow sound they gave in speeding up the caverns—the rattling of the shingle, as the waves retreated—all combined to deaden every other sound.

Following the point of his friend's finger, Gomer became aware that they were not the only spectators. Beneath the first archway, perched up on a nook so small that Gomer shuddered to look at it, was a young girl

dressed in a close-fitting grey dress, and a small black hat.

When a lull would occur in the tumultuous waves, (which generally happens in the most raging sea,) she lightly sprang down, and running into a small cavern, she would hastily gather something within it. Then, warned by the increasing roar, that the waves were coming, she darted out again, and was up on her little perch of safety, with the lightness of a fairy.

She might have been the happy spirit of the caverns, for her glistening white teeth showed that she laughed with delight, as the waves met with mighty power, and the foam rushed up into the air.

Breathless at her apparent danger, and her seeming ignorance of it, they tried to attract her attention; but the melodious bell-toned voice of Gomer, the deep, strong shout of the keeper, and the more shrill treble of West were alike unheard.

The keeper motioned to fire off a gun.

Gomer pantomined back to refrain, for the noise might startle her, and cause her to lose her footing; and while they were thus occupied, their dilemma was put an end to, by the girl herself. She saw them, as they could judge by her start. Gazing at them for a moment, she suddenly left the perch, and watching the waves, she partly crept, partly jumped, springing and clinging to the rocks with infinite agility, till she at last alighted on their platform.

With a blushing face, but quick, earnest manner, she took hold of Gomer's hand, and pulled him towards the pathway, waving her other hand for his companions to follow.

With blind obedience, and much amazement, they obeyed; and she, quitting Gomer's hand, on seeing them all on the pathway, ran on before with such speed and lightness, that she was sitting quiet and smiling under the shelter of an old wall, when they arrived, hot and breathless.

Looking up into Gomer's face, with frank,

sweet eyes, that seemed to apologize for her act, she said—

"The place on which you were standing is dangerous. The sea has so undermined the archway, that it is always feared, in a storm it may fall. And *this* is a great storm."

"Many thanks, pretty fairy," said West, before Gomer could speak. "I, for one, feel greatly indebted to your kind intervention."

"We thought you in much greater danger," said Gomer.

"Oh no. I can get round to that place quite easily, when the tide is low. It is no feat of daring, to perch yourself up where I was."

"I think you only require wings to be an angel, fair one," said West, putting on his most gallant and insinuating manner.

Looking for a moment at the speaker, whose fine dark eyes were beaming unmistakable admiration, and whose handsome face would have been remarkable for beauty anywhere, (of which the owner seemed quite sensible,) the young girl

turned away, and with a raised colour, she again looked up into Gomer's frank face, and said—

"You seem to like this fine scene."

"Indeed I do. I may almost say, I am wonder-stricken."

"If you like it, I will show you the chief beauties of the place, and the way by which I entered."

"I accept your offer with delight," said Gomer; "for I am so struck with the grandeur and sublimity of the scene, that had you not made the proposal of showing me more, I must have returned to that dangerous arch again."

The girl smiled in glad pleasure at his enthusiasm, and said—

"Sir, that is just like me. I never miss coming here in a storm, and sometimes I pass the whole day here. I call them the Dom Daniel Caverns, I dare say you know why. I know every nook and corner of them, and can show you most beautiful and natural arches and pillars, with lovely little caverns looking like mer-

maid's cells. For I can assure you, no day are these caverns the same, they are quite as beautiful when the sea is calm and good, though in a different way. Did you know them well, you would not think whole days wasted amid such beauty."

And as she spoke, her face glowing, her eyes sparkling, Gomer deemed he had never before seen such beauty as hers.

She seemed scarcely seventeen, and while a girlish simplicity pervaded her manner, there was a quiet grace and dignity about her, that showed she came of gentle blood.

Heavy masses of waving dark hair, all wet and spangled with spray, but added to the loveliness of her up-turned face, which was so fresh, so round, so infantile in its beauty, it seemed as if she had stolen it from one of the cherubs in heaven, and that its innocent, holy spirit shone through the light of her large grey eyes.

"Led by such a guide," said West, "I will join the party, and if you bid me, fair sea-nymph,

I will ride on the wildest wave and penetrate the innermost cavern of all."

Again her cheek flushed, caused as much by the freedom with which he spoke, as the undisguised admiration he permitted his eyes to express.

Turning to Lord Gomer, with her head raised in a simple but dignified manner, she said, "I am Miss Herbert, of Coadmore."

Taking off his hat, and bowing low with grave courtesy, he answered, "Permit me to name myself to you as Lord Gomer, my friend as Sir John West."

She bowed to both with gentle grace, and then said, "We must not delay, for the tide will not wait for us, and we shall be able to see very little when it is high."

Leaving them to follow her guidance, we will proceed to very different scenes.

## CHAPTER II.

In one of the richest and prettiest parts of the rich and lovely county of York, situated in an undulating park, was a fine old mansion, built in the regular old English style.

Forming a square, each corner of which was marked by a tower, that projected some ten or twelve feet, the vast size of the house was scarcely perceptible at first sight. It was only when within, that viewing the lofty halls, magnificent saloons, and traversing long galleries from end to end, that you could realize the idea of its extent. The southern side of the house

was taken up on the ground-floor by two fine rooms, opening one into the other, designated the state drawing-room and the library. These opened into one of the square towers, which comprised a bright sunny room, that went by the name of the summer parlour. Running along to the west, was a grand baronial hall, with deep mullioned windows, filled up with stained glass, and vast fire-places at each end, furnished with dogs, for burning gigantic logs. This hall had grand old furniture, of vast proportions, and unknown date; while heavy curtains of rich material, but sombre hue, added to the antique appearance of the room. Spacious old chairs, with straight uncomfortable backs, huge masses of sofas or settees, marvellous old side-boards, quaint screens, with life-size old portraits on the wall, filled up the great space in the ancient hall, and gave it a comfortable, grand look. And when the dry trunks of venerable oaks crackled and blazed on the great dogs, sending a roaring sound up the vast old chim-

neys, no wonder a grand and antique feeling stole over the senses, and thoughts rose akin to the pride and stiffness of the dames and cavaliers, looking so stately from the walls.

But there is nothing there at present, save two or three stray sunbeams, that are flickering about through the dark velvet curtains, as if determined to find out what they are guarding so zealously behind them, and yet half afraid to venture too far, lest they should be lost for ever in the gloom of that *vast* hall. It is in the pleasant summer parlour that we have to go, with its two or three priceless pictures, its half-modern, wholly comfortable, furniture, its bright fire-place and glowing coal fire, its many books, boxes, desks, and work apparatus, its beautiful rare old china, and above all, with its western and southern aspect.

There, look whichever way you would, long vistas of stately avenues, with the quiet graceful deer gliding between them, were to be seen, while the beautiful towers of York Cathedral

were visible from one window, and the lovely line of the Yorkshire wolds from the other. Two ladies alone enjoyed the many comforts and beauties of the summer parlour, and both as different, the one to the other, as the two rooms we have been describing. Both were middle-aged women, one perhaps ten years older than the other. And while the latter seemed, in dress and character, to be ready to descend, smiling and benign, into the old age that was before her, the younger and more stately dame deemed herself yet in the bloom of beautiful womanhood. Dressed with the richest elegance, her magnificent figure shewn off to the greatest advantage, her eyes dark and brilliant as ever; her face, beautiful in feature, with a youthful bloom upon it,—all might warrant the supposition, which it was evident she cherished; while the fair lovely countenance of the elder lady showed that the sunshine lighting up the summer parlour, was typical of her own sunny heart.

She is speaking in a *prononcé*, but still melodious tone.

"Yes, my dear Duchess, he is all I could wish, and I thank Providence for giving me such a son."

"I am glad, my dear Jane, to hear you say so, but I question whether you were quite judicious in still living with him, when he came of age. I can hardly think that two establishments would get on well together."

"But we came to an arrangement about that. He naturally felt, that as I had lived and ruled so long there, no other person was fit to continue to do so."

"But suppose he should marry, my dear Jane?"

"Oh! for heaven's sake, my dear Duchess, don't think of such a thing, for a moment,—a boy like that! Never. And only imagine, do I look in the least fit for a grandmother?"

The Duchess laughed, but said nothing. Lady Jane continued:

"He allows me five thousand a-year, and I, for that, undertake every expense."

"Surely," said the Duchess, "that is a great deal, especially as your jointure is three thousand a-year!"

"Yes, that is true; but Mr. Malcolm and I have our little expenses, and they, I can assure you, soon run away with three thousand a-year."

"Has Mr. Malcolm nothing, then?"

"Not that I know of," said Lady Jane; "at least, he always comes to me for money,—and that is pretty often."

"But do you think it is quite agreeable to Frank, always to have another person there, who (excuse me, my dear Jane) acts master as much as himself!"

"Oh! yes, it is not only very agreeable, but most convenient. Mr. Malcolm rides all his horses, and exercises his dogs, and looks after every thing, that you know a boy like Frank would never think about."

"But," said the Duchess, smiling, "Frank is

not a boy, he is twenty-three or more, and rather tenacious, I should say, of his own authority."

"My dear Duchess," said Lady Jane, coldly and haughtily, "you really know nothing about the case; I conceive matters are come to a pretty pass, if *I* don't know how to govern my own family."

"Nay, my dear Jane, don't be offended with me, I was but preparing you in some measure for the fact, that your children will assert their own authority some time or another, and that you cannot expect they will always yield to you the blind obedience they have hitherto done."

"I know nothing to prevent them," said Lady Jane, in a still more haughty manner; "I have ever been a most devoted mother to them, and I expect from them the same submission I have ever taught them to pay me, as my right to my dying day."

"Well," said the Duchess, mildly, "I will say but one more thing on the subject. Are

you quite right in putting off Augusta's marriage so often?"

"I am not aware that I ever put it off; she is a most perverse, obstinate girl, and had no business to think of marriage, for five years to come."

"But remember, Jane, how high-spirited she is, and think to what you may drive her, unless you fix some definite period for the marriage to take place."

"I have told her, that as soon as ever I think she is fit to take upon herself the duties of matrimony, I will consent."

"Pardon me, that is very vague; and to tell you the truth, I am commissioned by Augusta herself to put the question to you, and I must beseech an answer."

"Headstrong, foolish girl," muttered Lady Jane, the one line on her forehead becoming deeply marked and almost livid, as her black haughty eyes flashed with anger.

"Nay, do not blame her, she has now been

engaged for two years, with no earthly impediment to prevent her marriage all that time, save your commands. As her next nearest relative, she has appealed to me, and I must tell you very plainly, I think she is justified in making that appeal."

"Surely no woman was ever so plagued with two unhappy girls as I am," said Lady Jane, querulously.

"Augusta, my dear, is your own daughter in every thing, including beauty and pride; so judge by yourself, if you think she will submit much longer."

"Submit she shall," said the angry mother. "You may tell her from me, Duchess, that it is wholly out of my power to provide her with the fitting *trousseau* that she will deem necessary, for this year at least."

"But why? My dear Jane, are you not allowed a very handsome sum for both the girls? far more than they can spend yearly, on their whims and pleasures."

"I am not obliged to account for any of the money that is doled out to me for them. I mention again, as I did before, Mr. Malcolm has his little private expenses: he has been obliged to get a couple of new hunters, and I thought it necessary to have the family diamonds reset, which, with the proper bracelets to match, (most extraordinary that it was never done before), have swallowed up all the money I possess at present."

"But they are Frank's jewels, dear Jane, are they not?"

What retort Lady Jane would have made, remains to this day an unsolved problem, for a powdered footman entered, bearing on a massive salver the post of the day.

The two ladies became absorbed in their letters; but the Duchess did not remain long undisturbed, for Lady Jane uttered what would have been a very violent exclamation, had it not been partially smothered. Then, rising with much more haste than became her usual stately

deportment, she snatched up the rest of her letters, and swept out of the room, with a vicious bang of the door, that made the delicate cups dance in their fairy saucers, and sent a reverberating noise through the quaint old summer parlour.

The Duchess caught but one glimpse of her face, and whatever anxiety she may have felt, she plainly perceived that a violent fit of rage was the only matter that discomposed the usually lovely features of the Lady Jane.

Therefore she sat quiet, and peaceably finished her letters, sending a little mental wish after the irate lady, that the fit might pass away, ere she saw her again.

## CHAPTER III.

"My dear mother! all alone, moping! what hath become of 'Jane, the queen?' I thought, sweet mother, you were taking lessons in pride and arrogance, and not wishing to interfere in such a desirable work, I have studiously eschewed my sweet summer parlour this morning."

The speaker was a fine specimen of an English nobleman. Magnificent in his proportions, with a broad, manly chest, like a tower of strength, he united an almost feminine delicacy of features and complexion. High and ample

was his forehead, the smooth ivory running up on to his head, leaving a circle of thick crisp curls of fair hair all round it. Blue eyes of extreme brightness, and good humour, showed the world what a spirit of beneficence and *bon hommie* dwelt within the capacious bosom; while the mere sound of his fine strong, sonorous voice, imparted cheerfulness and hope to the hearers.

At all events, it gave pleasure to the Duchess, for she rose with alacrity, and the fond, proud mother beamed through even the lace and folds of her cap, as she greeted him:

"My dear, saucy son."

"I grant it, mother, but then I only indulge in such moods when alone with the mother who spoils me. Nevertheless, what has become of Lady Jane? And how long does she mean to honour our humble abode with her gracious presence?"

"I think until to-morrow, Elmore. To-day is the first opportunity that I have had, on

which to broach the subject of Augusta's marriage."

"And what happened? Did you not take kindly to her lectures, on the subject of bringing up children? Did you not promise, sweet mother, to snub your poor meek son, and while you could not stir without your coach and six, he must use the strong legs nature gave him, and be very thankful he had legs to use?"

"My son, you are hard upon her."

"I fancy, mother, with all my hardness, and the wish to be much harder, I never could be as hard as she is. I wonder if she ever read the history of Pharaoh? But forgive me. You know my opinion of Lady Jane. When the Yorkshire wolds are crowned with a city and population like London, then, mother, I will promise to assimilate my nature to hers."

"You know I do not love her myself, but for the sake of her children, I wish to keep on terms with her. They have no one to look

to; but ourselves. I can make no impression yet, as regards Augusta."

"If I was Augusta, I should elope."

"She has all the disposition to do so, I believe; but then her mother has all the money in her power, and I fancy Sir John does not marry only for a beautiful wife."

"If I had an unmarried daughter, the last person who should have her, should be Sir John West."

"Granted, my dear son, if you wished your unmarried daughter, as you call her, to be happy. I believe him to be thoroughly unprincipled, but I know not how to talk to either Jane or Augusta; on such a matter they would not understand me. He is strikingly handsome, tolerably rich, will make her Lady West, and, in the eyes of the world, is a very good match. But I cannot understand why Jane, allowing all this, does not suffer the marriage to take place."

"Dearest mother, is it possible that you don't

define the cause? Pray excuse my introducing such a delicate subject. Lady Jane only forbids the marriage, for fear Augusta should be so inconsiderate as to make her a grandmother!"

"My dear son, impossible. Sacrifice her child's happiness, on such a ground! No, no."

"May it please your Grace, I am certain of it, and beseeching pardon of your Grace, I know you must think as I do. I wish, however, that Augusta had chosen for her mate a person that I dislike less than I do Sir John, for I would have lent her my best assistance to elope. I am rather fond of thwarting Lady Jane, and having a little idle time at present, think I could have employed it very profitably in making two young people happy."

"My dear Elmore, what a boy you are!"

"I am, my dear mother, I own it. I rejoice in it. Here am I, almost bald, bordering upon thirty years of age, yet I feel as youthful and mischievous as when I beguiled my brothers

out all night, in an ardent pursuit of natural history; and you were roused in the morning, to hear that your wicked little sons, availing themselves of a latch key, albeit the eldest was but eight, had been out all night; their beds tenantless, their names unanswered, and their whereabouts unknown. I have often thought of that night, my dearest mother; and if you had not been very judicious and kind in your treatment of my delinquency, I should have become a star-gazer for life. What things they told me! What worlds they showed to me! as I gazed on them all through that night, watching my little sleeping worn-out brothers. I date a great deal that is odd in my character, to being moonstruck then."

"Dearest son, my heart's best blessing! Long may you keep your fresh, youthful heart, and be to us all, moonstruck or not, our light and joy—our—"

"Come, come, mother; is this the way in which you imbibe Lady Jane's lessons? But I

believe you are too old to mend, and must remain as you have ever been, a mother, and not only a mother, but the soother, comforter, friend, and adviser of all who deserve it; and the loadstone of your son's life!"

He lifted the small hand with reverence to his lips.

"So you did not succeed about Augusta?"

"I do not know yet, for the letters came in, and one discomposed her so much, that she left the room, in both wrath and haste."

"Perhaps Augusta has eloped. But I see my letters, and I think I will cull the pith of them, before we talk more of the matters of 'Jane the imperious.' Ah! perhaps this solves something—a letter from Frank. He never writes, but when in some mess, out of which he wishes me to pull him. I shall stroke the beard of contentment, I am sorry to say, if it happens to be aught that will tilt against the pride of my Lady Jane. You will allow me, dear mother, to encourage him in it, if it is so."

"I know, my dear son, that in whatsoever way you advise him, it will be 'wisest, discreetest, best—'"

"Really I must change mothers with Frank. I shall be surfeited with sweets, or become a spoilt boy, while he is in danger of being stung to death. Now if Frank would only take himself out of this world, and leave his mother Gomer and its appurtenances for herself, and that—(no, I won't soil my gracious lips)—what an angel he would be; and how she would mourn."

"Elmore, Elmore," said his mother.

"I feel very wicked and mischievous this morning; the fit came on with an almost irresistible inclination to kick Mr. Malcolm out of the house. I think I must have done it, had I not feared what my servants would say, to such employment for my ducal legs."

"You are really too bad this morning, son; pray read Frank's letter."

"Here it is then!"

"My dearest Cousin,

—" (Ah, mother, he is in a mess, behold how affectionate he is !)—

"'I write for your congratulations,'—(Well done, Frank ! I trust he has leaped over the maternal traces, to put himself into a matrimonial bit)—'I am going to be married to the prettiest, sweetest,. dearest girl, my eyes or any other person's eye ever saw.'

"Twice well done, Frank ! Mother, you will excuse me, if I ask Lady Jane to join me to-day at dinner, in drinking the health of her new daughter ?"

"My dearest Elmore, I dare not think of her state. No wonder she left the room in such wrath. I am delighted; Frank has risen greatly in my estimation ; I only trust she is a decentish sort of a girl. I feel sure of one thing—that she will not be like my Lady Jane. She is so totally unprepared for such a blow."

"She ought not to be so, however, nor any

mother, with a son verging on four-and-twenty, excepting mine, of course."

"I would willingly resign, my son."

"Ah! mother, spare me."

She pressed his hand, and as the noble head drooped on the broad chest, and the bright blue eyes were shadowed with a sad thought, she kissed his forehead tenderly.

It was but momentary. He returned her kiss, and resumed Frank's letter.

"I met her down here six weeks ago, and have met her every day since, and am therefore a pretty good judge of her perfections, which I need not say, my dear coz, are manifold. But you shall have a further report *vivâ voce;* at present I write to beg that you and my kind aunt will smooth matters over with my mother. I do not wish to be undutiful, but I feel sure the news will not be agreeable to her. She has always seemed to consider that I never was to marry; a matter on which, I need not assure you, I never agreed with her. Will you also kindly

give all the necessary instructions to my lawyers about settlements, and tell them what you would wish done in a similar case yourself, and let them send the draught to me for approval. Above everything, my dear cousin, bid them be sharp, as I wish to be married in six weeks. And married I will be, with or without settlements, as sure as I am your ever affectionate relation,

"FRANK GOMER."

"And so he shall, if I can help him."

"But, my dear son, I feel a little doubtful. Suppose he has been taken in by some pretty Welsh girl, of whom we perhaps may feel ashamed. I feel like you, that Frank will have chosen for his wife a person the reverse of his beautiful but imperious mother."

"I shall not blame him if he does, mother; and provided she has pretty teeth, and does not speak Welsh, shall probably take to doting upon her."

"Ah! Elmore, only to annoy some one, I doubt. But I think I must seek Lady Jane, and offer her some consolation."

"No, my dear mother, do not interfere. Lady Jane is one of those strong-minded females, who are delightfully blind to any thing like wisdom in their own sex. She looks upon a petticoat as nothing but a bag to hold weaknesses and sillinesses; and in her anxiety to avoid having anything to do with such rubbish, she rushes into the opposite extreme. A coat and hat, one covering a black heart and the other an empty head, will have more weight with her than the wisest woman that ever lived. Therefore, sweet mother, she may condescend to consult me, but she will think the matter much too important for female wits."

"Perhaps so, my son, but I feel rather sorry for her."

"Then go, my dear mother, and follow the bent of your kind heart, but oblige me by returning here again. The more I

think over the matter, the more serious it appears to me. Farewell for the present; I wish you God speed in your disagreeable task."

## CHAPTER IV.

The Duke's words were verified, for the Duchess returned in a brief space.

"Now, my dear mother," said he, handing her lovingly to her usual seat, "open your large heart, and receive a confession from the lips of your spoiled son. I have had, as you well know, a most devout antipathy for my Lady Jane, from my youth up. This has led me to shun anything like intercourse with her, or to interest myself in the least regarding our young relatives, her three children. I have often blamed myself for this; and as reparation is the best mode of

confessing one's evil deeds, I mean to show my contrition by assisting Frank. That his mother will throw every obstacle in the way of his marriage, I make no doubt. But I do not think that is what we have most to fear."

"My dear son, you feel that Frank may not have made a prudent choice. In fact, like most young men, curbed and controlled, as he has been, he has probably fallen in love with a pretty face, and nothing more."

"Exactly, mother; I think I see her now—a fat, fair, chubby, rosy, smiling girl, beaming with good humour, and smelling of bread and butter."

"My dear son, what a picture! Grant Frank a little better taste."

"Nay, I think I have drawn a very pretty picture, and you must prepare, my dear madam, for finding it even worse. But what I propose to do, is this: I will dispatch Stewart—upon my life, where now? I verily believe the love-sick boy has never divulged to us either

where he is, or what is the real name of Miss Taffy."

"I know he is on the Welsh coast, and your younger eyes may perhaps decipher the post-mark of his letter."

"Here it is, certainly, and very plain too. But who the deuce is to pronounce it? Now, madam, make use of all your senses, and tell me how you pronounce P-w-ll. Ah! I knew you would be posed. Then comes an h, and, fortunately for our obtuse English wits, an e, and now an l, winding up with another vowel. 'Pwlheli.'—Humph! shocking place apparently; no doubt Welsh for *somewheres* (as the children say) very hot. Frank, poor fellow! is evidently in a deuce of a situation. I will go and consult Stewart at once, and let you know the result."

"Don't be as absurd with him, my dear son," said the Duchess, smiling.

"Good heavens! no, madam, it is only with an indulgent mother, that I can steal plea-

sant pastime, with my otherwise gracious lips."

The reader shall now be indulged with a privilege, possessed by no friend or relative of the Lady Jane Malcolm's, however near and dear.

We will enter her boudoir, nay, we will go further, and venture to look into her heart, that heart, if we may judge by her countenance, now so beset with stormy passions.

She looked the enraged woman. Born of the ducal house of Nairn, the seed of a proud, imperious spirit was early planted in her childish heart, and gathered nurture from all that was around her.

The loving mother could see no fault in her beautiful imperious child. The indulgent father amused himself with the pride that glanced from her regal eyes. Neither saw the upas tree that was growing up, to mar so fair a work, but rather deemed her haughtiness only suitable to so much beauty, such high rank.

And as it grew, the nobler qualities of generosity, beneficence, and candour, that often bring forth their flowers from beneath a high and haughty front, were stifled in the bud; leaving room for rank weeds of selfishness, envy, and passion, to rise in their place, subservient to nothing but the heart of pride in which they flourished.

There could be only one thing said in favour of the Lady Jane, and to say in favour is, sooth to say, ironical. Her only sister surpassed her in everything but beauty. Nevertheless, this was so far an advantage to Lady Jane, that near her sister, she shone in amiable and softened character.

And when their father died in the prime of life, leaving them to the sole care of their fond but weak mother, their indomitable spirits soon rose above her control. Young as they were, their pride was bitterly touched at having to give place to a distant cousin, the title descending in the male line. And while on the one sister

this event had the effect of realizing an ancient proverb, and increasing her haughtiness and pride; in the case of the Lady Jane, it but stimulated her to use all her energies to replace herself in a position similar to the one she had lost. Not that she cared (like her sister) about rank; no, the Lady Jane was old enough to see that rank without money was rather like the ship without its rudder. A sordid spirit rose within her, though the jointure of a dowager Duchess, and the portion of the daughter of a ducal house, might have appeared countless wealth in the eyes of a commoner. Yet there was a difference, and that, no doubt, galling to such a spirit as hers. People of course did, and ever will, worship the rising sun, and it was not to be expected they would look upon the dowager and her daughters as they did now upon the reigning Duke and Duchess. For in every neighbourhood, whether large or small, there is a 'Squire, a Sir John, or a Lord; happy those who can claim a Duke. And these are

talked of in their own immediate circle, as of the singular number; as if but one of the species existed, and this one specimen was their own public property.

People boast of their county courts, their fine gaol, magnificent lunatic asylum; so they talk of "the great man." "The 'Squire hunts to-day." "My Lord was in town yesterday." "Sir John intends giving us a ball." "The Duke is rabbit shooting, I hear."

In the district of Nairn, the inhabitants were of the highly-favoured ducal lot; and what went on at the great house, what the Duke did, what the Duchess said, and how they both looked, formed by far the greater item of every person's conversation, high or low, rich or poor, about Nairn.

In the reign of Lady Jane's father, a sort of feudal homage, or distant worship, was the prevailing fashion; which, while it tended to foster the deadly sin already sprouting in the hearts of the Ladies Elmore, had a still worse

effect, in casing them in an artificial atmosphere.

Among the higher classes, it is at all times difficult for them to learn the exact truth of every thing around them. Their experience is principally gleaned from others. Their knowledge of every-day circumstances passing round them is superficial. Their friendships are generally burdened with constraint, or tinctured by insincerity. The truth rarely reaches them, and they live in much the same sort of notions and ideas as the little French Princess, when she said of her father's starving people, "Why don't they eat bread? I would, rather than starve."

The young Ladies Elmore knew about as little what passed in any house, save their own, as the eagle may be said to know of the mole's ways. They deemed themselves altogether made of a different species of china to the rest of the world, and that it would be derogatory in such fair porcelain to imagine themselves con-

nected in any way with the earthen pots and pans that did the world's work. It could not be remembered by any inhabitant of Nairn, that their mother had ever even blessed the village, by touching it with the sole of her foot—for she was never seen but in her carriage; and though she knew that some of her poorer neighbours had wants, she only supposed it, through seeing them take the trouble of coming to the castle to ask for assistance.

We cannot wonder, therefore, that her daughters, nurtured in the love and gratification of self, should have forgotten that the world had been made for other people besides themselves. And though their mother was sometimes inconvenienced with the constant change of nurses and governesses, unable to bear the tyranny of the spoilt high-spirited children, she never for one moment indulged the extraordinary idea, that it was her own or her daughters' fault.

She was indignant at the ingratitude of such low-minded people, when she was more than

usually troubled about getting others; but more generally they went and came, with much the same notice as the passing wind.

It was not, therefore, much to be surprised at that mother and daughters became the unconscious victims of an artful, designing, but clever governess, who, finding she could only rule her young charges through their hearts of pride, fostered that to so great a degree, every other feeling was very nearly extinguished in their bosoms.

The outside of both was fair and beautiful; the inside, alas! more fitting the daughters of Tartarus than a Christian land. No wonder that feudal homage was the order of their day. But when a distant relation, from a distant county, who had ever been distantly looked down upon by them, (for they always expected the son that never arrived), became Duke of Nairn, an entire revolution took place.

He proved to be a fine, handsome, jovial military man, and by his side might always be

seen the fairest, gentlest, most smiling face, that strawberry leaves ever surmounted.

He was "Hail, fellow, well met," with every creature he saw; was known to pat the urchins on the head, and chuck pennies for them to run for. To inquire after the rheumatism of the old men, and the number in their families, of the young mothers; to examine the schools, and take an interest in the quick scholars. To be ready with his advice, for all who asked for it. To be denied to none, whether rich or poor; to check the unruly with stern justice, yet help the penitent with pitying mercy. And in all this he had an helpmeet indeed in his wife. What wonder was it, that the feudal reign of worship gave place to loving adoration?

The inhabitants of Nairn had not only a Duke of whom to be proud, but one to love; and "our Duke," and "our Duchess," became a phrase of boundless self-gratulation. To belong to Nairn, was to be happy. No cottage was in ruins, no house dilapidated, no face

looked miserable. Happy, sturdy, healthful content went side by side with industry; and religion was the guide of both.

For surely as the Sabbath bells rang, so surely did the little postern gate in the park wall open; and arm in arm the noble pair walked to the little church, where, humbly kneeling before their God, they besought help to govern the people over whom they had been placed, and set an example of reverent worship to all around them. And they were followed by a goodly company of servants, making a small congregation of themselves.

Unlike the feudal times! For if they came to church at all, they rattled up to the churchyard in vehicles of all kinds, from his Grace's coach and four, down to an omnibus for the lower servants, though they had barely a mile to walk. That would not have been so bad, had they arrived before the service, instead of in the middle. And neither event would have been distressing, had they not conducted them-

selves with decent order when there. The good old clergyman's heart rejoiced for their sakes, when they did come to the House of God, but mourned in sorrow, at the evil example they set to the rest of the congregation.

## CHAPTER V.

But of all the circumstances that the inhabitants of Nairn felicitated themselves upon in the new dynasty, none seemed to afford more delight, than that they had a real, proper, and immediate descendant, by whom the reign of the "Good Duke" might be perpetuated. They had no less than four sons; but the Marquis of Elmore, the eldest, seemed at once to be growing up into a mixture of both father and mother. He had the fine handsome person of the one, with his quiet good sense and calm judgment, with the delicate features

and gentleness of the other. And when, after twenty years' reign, the Good Duke was gathered to his fathers, and sorrow ran like a whirlwind through the district of Nairn, every house feeling as if it had lost its head, every heart wailing as if for a parent, the only consolation to be derived was, that the young Marquis was worthy of his father's place ; and he proved so.

But we seem to have forgotten the Lady Jane.

Adjoining the district of Nairn, was a very large property, appertaining to an old Nabob, who after amassing immense wealth, had settled down to enjoy himself and his riches, with a pretty little sweet-tempered wife. There he amused himself with building a magnificent baronial castle, on which he spent incredible sums ; and feeling that such a case should not hold people of plebeian nomenclature, he had further paid an enormous sum to be created a Baron.

Luckily he had a son, who seemed to have inherited so much of his mother's sweet temper, that as long as his father amused himself, did not care how he spent his money, or trouble himself about the fact, that his father might leave him a house that could easily accommodate a small army, and a title that would require a little gilding, and yet provide no subsidies to fill the one, and no gold to keep the other bright.

But this son was in reality the safe-guard of his father; and when nature and his liver carried off the old Nabob Baron, Baron Francis Gomer found himself, at twenty-three, heir to twenty thousand a-year, with a magnificent castle to keep up, and a fond, doting mother to help him to do it.

He was a fine, frank, handsome fellow, with his mother's golden hair, and bright blue eyes, the same that had won her the heart of the old Nabob. His disposition was affectionate and domestic; his learning or wisdom not

great, his tastes sporting and countrified. He hated London—thought balls and parties a great, but necessary bore—adored hunting, and deemed himself born to shoot, and educated to fish. In fact, he was in his element in the country, and throve and flourished therein, until he bid fair to enter the lists against Sir Roger de Coverley, as a good country 'Squire.

And his good little fond mother encouraged him in his bent, and the twain together were a sight to see, so loving and tender they were of each other.

But the Baronial Castle, with its turretted towers, mullioned windows, gothic furniture, and magnificent appearance, in which the good little mother wandered about quite uncomfortable, and the affectionate son filled with dogs, pets, and friends, (upon which desecration it frowned awful disapprobation) became a trap to their happiness.

The first time the Lady Jane beheld Gomer

Castle, she determined to reign therein; and having heard from her maid—(for your proud people, the more they exalt themselves in public, the more they descend in private, and the Ladies Elmore, for want of more proper and genial friendship, were at the complete mercy of the gossips of their maids,)—of the countless wealth of the old Nabob, condescended to overlook the plebeian origin, for the sake of the Castle and its fortune.

Little did the good mother think, when her son intimated, with animated eyes, that the Lady Jane did not appear to dislike his attentions, what was in store for them both. And when the high-born stately girl went through the magnificent rooms, led by the sweet-tempered smiling mother, whose every other word was "Frank," little did either know what was passing in the hearts of the other.

The gentle good mother was thinking of her darling son's increased happiness, possessing a wife so high in rank, so faultless in

beauty and manners. Certainly she had heard rumours of the pride and ill temper of the Ladies Elmore; but the Lady Jane was ever well spoken of, when the Lady Julia was condemned by all, and loved by none. Ah! poor little fond mother, the Lady Julia had nothing of the Upas tree in her heart. What she thought was spoken, while the Lady Jane had learnt to throw a veil over her intentions, and all the more when they concealed the sting of the wasp.

She pictured herself, still residing with "the light of her eyes," holding any place in the establishment, rather than be separated from her beloved Frank; and thinking with joy that a young lady so highly bred, would gladly resign to her the trouble and annoyance attending the government of so large an establishment, and devote herself entirely to the happiness of her husband. Sunny and smiling as her own face were the pictures that ran floating through the brain of the good little mother, as

she conducted her son's intended wife over her future home. The eyes of the stately Lady Jane never descended upon the gentle and simple Lady Gomer, without a sort of mental resolve, that when the connubial knot was tied, a person so utterly countrified, so incongruously placed, should be politely furnished with some distant cottage covered with roses. Lady Jane was so far right in thinking that Lady Gomer would be happier in a cottage than in the great castle, in which she locked herself perpetually; but the roses dwelt in her own bosom, and bloomed and faded, according to the weal and woe that befel her Frank.

Also, when the haughty eyes rested upon that same Frank, now so soon to be hers, an entire renovation in his habits and personal appearance was mentally resolved by the Lady Jane, whose notions of domestic happiness were the exact reverse of Lady Gomer's. No more dogs allowed in the house, no hunting, or hunting acquaintances. Grand, stately, dull dinners,

a routine of steadily pursued London gaiety, filling the grand rooms of the grand castle with the grand people, proper to inhabit them; cutting all countrified relations, all jovial, happy retainers, all hilarious, unsophisticated company; in fact, every thing that had flourished in the reign of Lady Gomer, or that had brightened up the great baronial hall.

But we are dwelling too long upon the antecedents of Lady Jane. She became what she wished, mistress of a magnificent home, possessor of great wealth; and in properly keeping up the credit of the former, and in spending the latter, she banished the Lady Gomer, and darkened her future life; she changed her husband from the happy, frank, domestic man, into a gloomy, passionate wretch, who sought to drown his miseries in riotous living, and drank himself to death within ten years of his unfortunate marriage.

She was the one black spectre of fear that always poisoned the little happiness her three

children possessed. She became the incubus that weighed upon the well-doing and flourishing condition of the domain of Gomer. For whereas the evil and ill-disposed, by hypocritical cant and well-timed flattery, could obtain their ends, the right-minded, plain-spoken, humble individuals might deem themselves lucky, if they were not treated with rudeness, much less expect justice. Justice in those days was administered by Lady Jane's pride, and that pride had no law but self-gratification.

No wonder then that the domain of Gomer groaned and lamented, the evil only rejoicing and making mischief worse, while the peaceable and good called in patience to their aid, which bade them wait until their young Lord was of age.

He was the exact image of his father, which, unlike the sentiment in most mothers' bosoms, gave Lady Jane a very uncomfortable feeling, and made her rather dislike her son than not.

Fortunately for him, he had other guardians besides his mother; and having a very strong

notion of the unhappiness of his childish years; a faint recollection of the misery of his father; a constant reminder that nothing was improved there, by the moroseness of one sister and the peevishness of the other,—he troubled his home very little.

Consequently he grew up to the delight of all who knew him, a fine, intelligent likeness of his father, the only sunbeam left to his good old little grandmother, and the only incubus his mother had. Within a year of her husband's death she had married a handsome moustached military man, with nothing in the world to recommend him; one whom she ruled with despotic sway; while, so long as he was fed, and clothed, and amused, he cared little for aught else.

The constant absence of her son, gave Lady Jane, of course, unlimited sway over every thing; and she had ruled and governed, to her heart's content, over the magnificent castle, for whose sake she had sacrificed the happiness of one life, and destroyed that of another. Her

son's coming of age had rather disturbed her; but, like all people occupied with but one idea, one so monstrous as that he should marry and dethrone her, had never been able to make its way into her brain. Gomer Castle, Gomer domain, every thing in, about, and belonging to it, was made for her and her only. Some one bordering on insanity, might have hinted the fact of a young Lady Gomer, but *I* would have taken care to absent myself from the presence of Lady Jane, on such an announcement.

## CHAPTER VI.

The Duke of Nairn was right in his surmises, that Lady Jane would not consult his mother, but, on the contrary, send for him, after having been shut up in her room for half the day.

The dark mark on her brow was conspicuous, and her voice was tremulous; but her cousin rightly judged it was from suppressed passion, more than any thing else.

Wishing to spare the rigmarole he felt certain was coming, about her love, her devotion, her affection for her children, and the poor return

she received, and rather mischievously inclined also, the Duke at once dashed into the matter.

"So Frank is going to be married."

"Oh dear, no!" said Lady Jane, with an hysterical sob. "He has taken it into his stupid little head to fall in love, but that we must expect in boys of his age."

Now, considering the stupid little head belonged to a fine, tall, well-made young man, six feet in height, this was rather too barefaced of Lady Jane. So the Duke answered rather curtly:—

"He tells me so in a letter I received to-day, and that he expects to be married in six weeks."

A slight scream burst from Lady Jane, then a very vicious exclamation, then a violent protestation.

"It must be stopped, Duke. I entreat your assistance,—I can never submit to Lord Gomer's thus disgracing himself; as part of the family,

I claim your instant help. You must join with me in utterly forbidding such a mad act."

"I do not very well see what right you and I have to forbid Frank's marrying his cook-maid, if he has a fancy for it. At all events, he can do it without asking our leave, or caring for our approbation," returned the Duke.

"God help me, what a situation I am in, such a mother as I have been! I have written to him, written strongly, declared I never would see his face more, that he should never enter my house again."

"Humph! that's rather strong, considering it is his own, and that he may turn you out."

Lady Jane shivered with rage, and could not articulate.

So the Duke made the most of the opportunity; saying, "Come, my dear Jane, don't distress yourself, make up your mind that your son must marry. Let us only hope that his natural good sense and excellent taste will lead him to choose a wife that shall please us all. A very

difficult thing I can assure you. By my mother's advice, I have dispatched Stewart to the place with the hot name, to find out all particulars about Miss Jones, that being, I suppose, her name, and we will decide nothing until he returns. Believe me, then, whatever way we may find it most judicious to act, kindness will have more weight with Frank than any severity. Allow me to recall your letter. I see Frank now, as he receives it; being in love, he will naturally conclude it is insulting to Miss Jones, and as the best reparation in his power, he will tuck her under his arm and carry her off to church, and make her Lady Gomer on the spot. Come, come, take it coolly."

"Take it coolly," said Lady Jane, hissing out her words like red hot coals. "Take it coolly! Ah! you are not a mother, and such a mother—"

"No, thank goodness," said the Duke.

"God in Heaven, I shall go mad," said Lady Jane, looking very insane indeed.

"Very foolish, if you do," said the Duke, hastily rising to leave the room, for he had no mind to be the keeper on such an occasion, and returning to his mother, he gave her a description of the conversation, winding up with saying: "She had out-Jane'd herself."

"At all events I have secured her letter to Frank, which smells strongly of brimstone, and I think we can do no more until Stewart returns with an account of Miss Jones."

Lady Jane sat down to write her misfortunes to her sister. For though they never were on terms two days together, when in personal contact, yet their correspondence was vast, and it was a relief to pour into the sympathizing bosom of the one, the wrongs the world inflicted upon the pride of the other. It can well be imagined then, that Lady Jane did not spare unparliamentary language, when she wrote to tell her sister of the overwhelming wrong she was about to undergo; the black ingratitude of her son was painted in strong language, with a vivid description of the

horrible, vulgar, designing, fat, red-haired Miss Jones, that helped him to be so base.

The Lady Julia Elmore was a character in her way. After having teased her poor weak mother into her final resting-place, (which mother was remarkable for nothing in character, and only a prominent nose in feature), she had lived alone; that is, only with her establishment, in the large gloomy old town house, that had been left her mother as jointure house, and which the present Duke kindly permitted his cousin to retain, on what may fairly be called, no terms.

The Lady Julia, as I have intimated before, was an exaggeration of Lady Jane; her pride was so great, that like all over-weening things, it had utterly choked almost every other sense and feeling. And she was therefore about as weak and silly in matters of importance, as can well be conceived. She was not without her matrimonial ideas, in fact she would have fainted had any one supposed she was verging on old

maidenism, and indeed, had not been without many opportunities of taking upon herself the matrimonial yoke. But coming of a ducal house, her mind could entertain no other idea, but that she must mate accordingly. And, after searching through the strawberry leaves, she had come to the conclusion that her relation, the Duke of Nairn, was the proper person to come in form, and entreat for the honour of her hand. Thus she should be restored to her proper home and place, and she would condescendingly overlook the fact, that his father did not obtain his Dukedom through a direct descent, but was very nearly approaching the condition of a commoner, when fortune thus favoured him.

It is needless to say, that she had already waited some time, (the cause of which she stated, and fully believed, to be the Duke's diffidence), and still more futile to remark, that she was likely to wait some time longer.

But leaving her private affairs, we will proceed to state that the Lady Julia fully entered

intc her sister's agonizing distress, and dispatched an answer forthwith to her letter, that comforted the Lady Jane considerably; for whereas her's was bitter, the Lady Julia's was gall. And had she lived in the time of the Inquisition, Frank and Miss Jones would have spent their honey-moon there, without a doubt.

Feeling also that she ought to help her sister in so difficult a dilemma, and having warmed herself up into a happy state of red heat, she likewise dispatched a missive to Frank, wherein after fulminating upon his head, and that of his lady-love, every vituperative plunge she could think of, she wound up by threats.

"Let him marry,—he might.—Who would care?—Who would trouble to think about it?—Who would interest themselves?—Who could interest themselves about a Miss Jones?—Jones indeed, she was only surprised she knew how to spell the word 'Jones.' But one thing both he and Miss Jones must be prepared for.

One thing would certainly take place, which it was as well they should know, before they married. It should never be said that she, Lady Julia Elmore, could or would notice any thing that had borne the name of Jones. If her nephew disgraced himself by such an alliance, he was her nephew no longer. She should be dead to both. They must live without her. And she now bade him an eternal farewell."

The Duke not being by, of course this letter went, and being received by Frank, caused at first a few expletives of wrath, then a few bursts of laughter, and finally led, for the period of its brief life, a very troubled existence in the Dom Daniel Caverns. For Frank was wandering there, with a certain young lady, to whom we ought now to return, and the Lady Julia's letter was consigned by him to the waves, in a mutilated condition. And ere the last fragment had disappeared, the writer's existence was forgotten.

## CHAPTER VII.

In a large old-fashioned chair, covered with ancient and time-worn needle-work, sat a venerable lady.

Her snow-white hair was drawn high over her forehead, and while underneath could be seen an old-fashioned crimped cap, yet a black silk handkerchief formed the most conspicuous part of her head-dress. The rest of her dress was rich and black, and the style of her face was truly Norman, with eyes from which, though dimmed in their lustre, beamed forth the chastened happiness of a redeemed spirit.

Her withered hand rested on the shoulder of a young girl seated at her feet, whose eyes were downcast, yet hardly could the long lashes conceal the brightness sparkling from them, while the rich colour came and went in her cheek, like the flitting of rose-coloured clouds over the evening sunset.

And the dimples played about her mouth and chin, as if impossible to repress the happy spirit within.

"So, my Nessie," said the venerable old lady, half smiling, half sadly, "I am to lose my May-bird, my sunbeam."

"Oh, granny, I will not leave you, if you wish it!" murmured the young girl.

"My darling, no; I was but playing with you. No, no, I thank God my prayers are heard, and that I shall leave you in lawful hands, to guard such a treasure. My pet, listen to me. I have prayed to God daily that I might have an opportunity of seeing you settled before I die. You know how old and frail I am, my child;

much past the age allotted to miserable man. It is now ten years since I had my first warning in losing the use of my limbs, and being chained to my old chair, as it were. I have, therefore, been preparing for my last change. Through the mercy of my blessed Lord and Saviour, I feel that the home of the blessed may be mine, if I humbly trust in His mercy and goodness; repenting me of my woful sins and many short-comings."

"Oh, granny! you so good?"

"Hush! my sweet one, the wickedness of each heart is only known to God; and merciful it is to feel that there is one who can see; one who will judge the waywardness of human hearts; one who sees not as man seeth, judges not as man judges, but will cast the shadow of His displeasure over the spirit, so as to warn the wicked heart; will shelter with mercy the repentant one, and help with mighty hand the wavering soul. It is mercifully ordained that an all-seeing eye beholds our inmost hearts; that

such knowledge may cull the evil thoughts and bless the good ones. God be praised for his many mercies to me, a poor miserable sinner, and for none more than the thought that I shall not leave my little angel spirit alone, ere I go hence. You know, my Nessie, that you have neither father, mother, brother, sister, kith or kin."

"I know that you have been all to me, granny," said the girl, the tears springing to her eyes as they flashed up a look of unutterable love on the fine majestic face.

"And, my darling, *I* am no relation or connection to you either. Don't weep, my bird; don't you know that you have been my blessing, my light, the sole thing that has kept me here so long? And when I rejoice that I am going to give my treasure into strong young hands, fitted to guard her through the storms of life; I know my frail feeble life is drawing to a close, and my work almost done.

"But I wish to talk to you, Nessie, and I

know full well, my words will fall on a quick and attentive ear. I wish to excuse myself, dear, to you, for what might prove hereafter no blessing to you, for closing so suddenly with this young man's offer, and knowing so little of him as we do."

"Oh, granny! do you think harm can dwell in such a frank face, so gentle and sweet an eye?"

"My love, I cannot blame you for so thinking, when he has caught my old heart as well; and I can, after two months' acquaintance, trust my darling to his care. But I must proceed. You know, dear, you are of an ancient and very honourable family, and that you came to be left to my care, through direful misfortunes that befel your own people. All this, you know full well; you will have an ample, not to say large fortune. This, thank the great Giver of Goodness, while it may be no particular object to him we know of, darling; yet had I died and left

you unwedded, would have exposed you to many sad troubles, I doubt.

"I have been careful, as you know, my pet, to spare no expense as to your education, feeling that the case in which God has been pleased to place such 'an excellent spirit,' should want none of the world's polishing to perfect it. You are, though brought up in this wild place, fitted to mate with the highest in the land. And I listened all the more to the proposals of him you know, sweet one, because I knew your refined and delicate nature could meet with no congenial spirit here. All these circumstances have made me more precipitous than I should otherwise have been, in regard to the future happiness of my child. Had I been less helpless, I should have made inquiries concerning his family and people. As it is, Ness, like you, I have placed my trust and faith on his frank eye and loving face. And his nature must be kindly, for he ever comes to my chair with

gentle speech, and ways more like a loving woman, than a spirited young man."

The fair face of Ness glowed with pleasure as the old lady spoke, though her eyes were still downcast.

"But, my gentle one, you must not expect that all will be well with you. Crosses and disappointments are like waves of the sea; they course each other with untiring and resistless speed."

"I feel, I know it, dear granny," murmured Ness.

"It is well to start on matrimonial life with a good bank of love, on which large draughts may be drawn, that are never repaid. People say they can die for the beloved one. How feel you, my Nessie?"

"Granny, dying is easy, for one you love, and you can die but once. I would live to endure for——him;" she began, with her radiant eyes uplifted, the cherub spirit speaking in them; but the fringed lids dropped like cur-

tains, and the rich colour crimsoned even the little crossed hands as she thus laid bare her maiden heart.

"So, so, my pet, that's well; a pure and unselfish love, is an anchor in the most fearful storms of life. It comes ere the proud young heart is properly bent to seek its God in all humility and trust, thinking its own strong spirit can fight alone against the world. But his family, my darling, so grand and noble! I have heard it said, family love dwelleth but little in such high estate. They think more of proprieties. Nevertheless, I am not wholly without knowledge of the great world, though it's years gone by. Then the higher the estate, the nobler the spirit, 'pride and poverty go together;' a mean spirit makes all things mean, whether high or low. My bird, I must trust you, with God's blessing, to the strangers; to my mind, they have but to look at you, to love you."

"But oh, granny! think of my happiness.

I am to have a mother, a mother at last, and two sisters, granny; I shall be so happy. But he has no brother, and I should have liked all—a father, mother, brothers, and sisters; I, dear granny, who never had one. But he has a kind cousin, who has been like a brother to him."

"I could have wished, my child, to have seen them all, for your sake. It does not follow, that though chained to my old arm-chair, that my eyes of love are dimmed and useless; I could yet see well, for my loved one."

"Oh, granny! do not fear, they will all be kind to me; for I shall never have the wish even to displease them. And a mother! think if I could do any thing to hurt her feelings. Oh, no; I will make them all love me, if they will but let me try."

"And with the blessing of God, you will succeed, my love. Your nature is so unselfish and loving, and your motive so pure and amiable, the gracious benediction of your Father in Heaven will be yours, I feel and know it. But

you must not expect to be quite yourself at first, darling; everything will be so different; everything will appear strange to you. You, who have had no one to please but your fond old granny; you, who have been brought up to love nature, and worship your God through His grand works! my Nessie, how will you bear a grand and stately life, cold and world-like eyes, forms and ceremonies, eating into the comforts of life? My child, it may be a grand thing to belong to the high and noble of the land, but they have their cares and troubles; they have inconveniences and troubles, which we, of a lower grade, happily escape. I have tried them all," continued the old lady, as if to herself. "My long and chequered life has had many ups and downs, fortunes and vicissitudes. The experience of the days of my pilgrimage is, that the middle class of society has not the griping cares of the poor, nor the harassing ceremonies of the rich to contend with. They are happiest; not too much expected from them,

neither too much patience, nor too much latitude. And, my child! am I right to let her away from it? Yes, she is of a high and generous spirit, comes of a noble and ancient stock, she must shine wherever she is. She may be meant for a burning light. God has sent this young man as the fitting instrument to place her in her proper sphere. May He bless her, keep her, help her, love her! May my heart's blessing win her way to Heaven, through trials and difficulties no doubt, but with a single purpose, with an high resolve, with a firm will, to have no other guide, rely on no other aid, than her God and Saviour!"

The young girl changed her attitude for one of prayer, and laid her clasped hands on the aged knee, while her venerable friend closed her eyes, and remained for some moments wrapped in communion with her God, her spirit wrestling in prayer for her beloved one. And as the eyes opened again, with fervent voice these words broke from the rosy lips of the

young girl—"May God help me in my new life, for the sake of my Saviour, Jesus Christ, Amen!" And her eyes shone with the purity and adoration of an angel's, seeming to cast a halo round them.

## CHAPTER VIII.

The Duke was reading to his mother, when the powdered footman once more opened the door of the summer parlour, and announced,

"Mr. Stewart, your Grace."

"Ah, Stewart! my man; welcome home. I was dreaming of you last night, so I fully expected you to-day, according to your Scotch notions. Well, now sit down, I am all impatience. How now, about Miss Jones?"

Mr. Stewart smiled at the Duke's eagerness, but, until he had made his proper bows and

obeisances to the Duchess, and enquired slowly and tenderly after her valuable health, he could not be made to understand any thing else.

"Come, come, man! that's enough, don't you see her Grace is in brilliant health. How could she be otherwise, when I have devoted myself to her, through not having you to bother me with your presence?"

"Weel, your Grace, you're in fine speerits na doubt"—

"No, I am not, I assure you—I am pining for your news. How's Miss Jones? has she red hair? does she speak Welsh?"

"May be she do, your Grace, but deed, I never asked."

"So, she is Miss Jones. Do you hear, mother?"

"Oh, deed! that she be, and a maist sensible, amiable personage, to my thinking."

"Well, man! go on, your news is satisfactory, I know by your eye, which rejoices me, for Lord Gomer's sake."

"Let Stewart tell his own tale in his own way, my dear son," said the Duchess.

"I am, I own, rather boyish about the matter, and I believe from no good motive—but go on, Stewart."

"Weel, I hae to hand your Grace, and your Grace the Duchess, mony congratulations ahint the matter. My Lord Gomer is a lucky mon, and I could na help just hustling agin the tenth commandment for your Grace's sake."

"How's that, Stewart? I have enough of sins to answer of my own, without fathering yours."

"I was aye sorry yer Grace had na seen the young leddy the first. My certie! but I didna think ye wad hae let ony one hae her but yerself."

"What? is she such a beauty?"

"There's mair about her than beauty. I didna speer much about her hair or comeliness, but she has the lovely een, with an angel's look in them, and is that gracious in her ways,

I think she wad just do to place beside my lady Duchess there."

"Ah! but there is one great impediment why I could have nothing to say to her, for does she not rejoice in the name of ——?"

"I ax your Grace's pardon, but she comes of a very ancient and honourable family, and she has a fine estate of her own, worth fifteen hundred a year, with no less than pairt of Llanberris' mountain, wherein are them great slate quarries. Heh, sirs? but it's my belief, were them quarries opened, her riches wad be uncountable. Being but women-folk, they have never fashed theysels about them; but as the auld lady says, she thought it best to wait until her young leddy was wedded, and then the young folks might just amuse their sels."

"So she has a mother?"

"Na, she has nae relations o' ony kind. This auld lady is just her guardian, and she has brought up the young leddy, giving her

the best of edications, and accomplishments, and doing her duty by her, and she is furnishing her up weel with grand gear fra' Mistress Murray's, the great London milliner; and she's to have a fine London maiden to wait on her, so that she may come as she suld, into her new family. But did she come to your Grace with no a bawbee, and a linsey gown, I ken ye wad be weel off."

"Bless you, man! why, you are in love with her yourself. I sent you, because I knew you were a discreet, knowing old fellow, and would spy out the rights of the case sooner than most people."

"Weel, I dinna ken, your Grace, that I hae shewn muckle want o' wisdom as yet. With your leave, I'll just pit that question to your Grace after ye hae seen the young leddy."

"You are so enthusiastic, that I think I had better start at once, and see if my ducal coronet will not outweigh Frank's puny baronial one."

"Heh! you're ower late, your Grace, there's a glint o' love in her een for my Lord, that will tak a sea o' troubled waters to wash out. A coronet indeed! she'll put her foot on't, mair than let it cum atween her and her love."

"I declare you are quite romantic, Stewart. Nevertheless, your account pleases me well. If she has so warmed up your cold, calculating old Scotch heart, I shall be prepared to be quite subdued under her charms. There is nothing then to hinder or prevent the marriage taking place."

"Naething, your Grace; and my Leddy Jane should thank God on her knees every night, that her one son has fallen into a plot sae favoured. I hae a letter from the auld ancient lady to your Grace, and one to my Leddy Jane which I hae sent up, or I came in hither."

"Mother," said the Duke, as he opened the letter, "we must congratulate each other on Frank's prospects; for though I joke with my

old friend Stewart, my faith in his wisdom is unlimited."

"I thank yer Grace," said the short, right-mind, sturdy old Scotchman.

"Let me hear the letter, my son," said the Duchess, "ere I fully allow myself to rejoice in Stewart's good news."

"Here it is then, written in the most quaint old hand you ever saw. Some such writing as Moses would have used, I dare say, when he wrote the Pentateuch."

"His Grace must hae his say, madam, but he is ower fond of bringing in Scripture in his lighter talk."

"Tut, man! I quoted nothing. Listen to the letter; it will be well if it's as clear."

"My Lord Duke—

"It pleases me well that your Grace has sent so trusty and knowledgable a person as Mr. Stewart, to make inquiries concerning the purpose of marriage between my ward and the

Lord Gomer. For I read therefrom that he is worthy the care and love of his relations, be they high or low. And I shall, therefore, the more cheerfully trust the happiness of one so young and guileless as my child into his hands. That the Lady Jane Malcolm may be freed from any like anxiety (that with justice she might entertain,) I have furnished Mr. Stewart with the pedigree, history, and prospects of my ward, which I trust will be equally satisfactory to your Grace.

"I am so old and frail, that I can bear no great marriage festivities, yet your Grace would be welcome, could you attend the ceremony.

"Mr. Stewart hath given me great joy and comfort in the thought that her Grace, your mother, will be good to my little one, whose tender heart blooms freshly with loving treatment, but would droop and perish in a cold and bitter world.

"I beseech your Grace's courtesy to believe me your much beholden,

"MARGARET JONES."

"So she is Jones too. Well! a very good sensible letter of the old lady's. And little Miss Jones is young and simple, is she? unused to a cold and proud world?"

"Na, na, your Grace. Miss Jones is very auld and ancient," said Mr. Stewart, "and a vara sensible discreet woman, knowing well a' this fulish world's ways."

"But young Miss Jones, I mean."

"And wha is she, your Grace?"

"Why, my Lord Gomer's intended bride."

"Oh! save your Grace, she's Miss Herbert of Coadmore."

"What! not Miss Jones? Now that's very disappointing. I shall lose all interest in the matter if she turns out so pretty, so amiable, so rich, and not Miss Jones. Why man, you told me she was Miss Jones."

"Deed, your Grace, I kenned ye were spaking of the auld lady."

"Then, so far from Lady Jane having anything disagreeable to swallow in this match, she

will have to thank her stars that Frank has been so lucky."

"Deed hae she! Oh! but I wad your Grace had seen her first. There's a bit stately air about her, just yer ain way, and wi' that undone for your Grace's settlement in fair marriage."

"Hush, hush, Stewart!" said the Duchess in a low voice, to the honoured old man, for a spasm of pain crossed the fine countenance of the Duke, as if some sore recollection was wringing his heart.

"Oh madam! your Grace," whispered the old man in return, "if he wad but get owre that sad recollection—and bless—"

At that moment the door opened, and Lady Jane appeared, with an inflamed countenance, and hands trembling with agitation, as she handed some papers to the Duke.

"I do not see, Mr. Stewart, that you have fulfilled the intentions with which you were sent to Pwlhelli," said she, haughtily and angrily.

"What's your will, my leddy?" said Mr. Stewart, drily. His upright, honourable character, and faithful observance of his many duties, as confidential adviser and agent to the Nairn family, had given him a sort of fatherly interest in all that concerned them, and made their interests his; he entered into all their joys and sorrows, as one of the family; while they loved and venerated the old man, as if he really was part of themselves. This established a freedom of speech on the one side, and an affectionate confidence on the other, utterly incomprehensible to the Lady Jane. She, therefore, showed her entire disapprobation of such conduct, by uniformly treating Mr. Stewart with extreme hauteur, not even granting him the civility she bestowed upon her butler. He showed no ill-will, notwithstanding, but keeping as much aloof from her as possible, gave her in general the shortest answers he could, when obliged to come in contact.

"I thought you went to Pwlhelli, to put an

end to my son's folly, instead of bringing me a foolish rhapsody from some vulgar old Welch woman," retorted the Lady Jane.

"I could na presume, my leddy, to do mair nor his Grace's orders," said the old Scotchman.

"I think, Jane, you will find," said the Duke, "that there is no occasion to be uneasy about Frank. His intended seems in every way suitable to him; being of excellent family, large fortune, and well educated."

"You are all against me; poor miserable mother that I am," said Lady Jane. "Do you think, for one moment, I can suffer Frank to marry a country bumpkin like this Welsh girl here?"

"She is not represented as such, Jane," said the Duchess. "I do not see, from what we hear, on what possible grounds you can refuse your consent."

"She is an artful, designing person, I make no doubt," said Lady Jane.

"Why don't you go and see for yourself, Jane?" said the Duke; "it would look very pretty and maternal of you to do so."

"Pray don't add to my annoyances, by your foolish raillery, Duke," said Lady Jane. "I would not cross the room, on such an errand."

"Then you really must listen to reason. The young lady seems in every way suited to Frank, and it will not do to withdraw now."

"Then," said Lady Jane, "I shall insist upon her going to a first-rate London school, to have proper masters, and be polished in some slight degree, before I can suffer her to appear as my son's wife."

"Heh! to hear that noo!" said Mr. Stewart, casting up his eyes in amazement.

"To hear what?" said the angry lady, with a frowning brow, and stamp of the foot.

"Naething, my leddy. I ax yer pardon. I mak nae doubt the young leddy can read and write, that's a'."

"I shall desire Lord Gomer," continued Lady

Jane, "to make proper arrangements regarding this matter; and if I find she is sensible of the advantage, and desires to improve, I may perhaps allow the marriage to take place in a year or two."

"Hark till her!" involuntarily uttered the old Scotchman.

"Come, Stewart," said the Duke, seeing the flit of passion that flashed from Lady Jane's eyes, "we will release you from further questions to-day. Many thanks for all you have done in the matter. By-the-bye, are there any more such girls about there? I'll get my mother's leave to take a little tour into Wales, on my own account. There, my good man, get you gone!" good-naturedly shoving him out of the room; for he saw the Scotch blood was rising and he felt the Lady Jane was in wrath.

## CHAPTER IX.

The amiable and disinterested intentions of Lady Jane were entirely smothered, and that by no less a person than her son himself. He came home unexpectedly, and being informed of her intended kindnesses, ungratefully and remorselessly rejected them altogether;—not without some very ugly words too, which adding fuel to the Lady Jane's already excited state, raised a blazing bonfire between them. Frank galloped over to Nairn after this scene, to consult the Duke, be consoled by him, and relieve his feelings with a little vituperation.

"My mother," said he, after detailing the event, "is mad, positively stark, staring mad. Her pride is the very devil! School, indeed! civilised, forsooth! I shall go mad—I feel mad."

"My dear boy, you look it," said the Duke; "and I should fancy such a state is not favourable to matrimony."

"Oh, cousin, pity me! You don't know what my mother is. You don't know how she aggravates one, so cool and sarcastic. She killed my poor father, and she will kill me."

"Come, Frank, don't be so boy'sh, why do you mind her? Go and get married as quick as you can; give her notice to quit, and then settle down comfortable."

"Ah! that's the deuce of it! I know she is making all this fuss, because she does not want to quit. She does not care one jot for me individually, and never did."

"Hush, my boy! remember she is your mother. You owe her duty, if nothing else."

"I wish to be dutiful; I have ever tried to be so. But now, when I have such prospects of happiness, such a little angel for a wife, when it is fit time I should settle, this is the manner in which she shows her affection for me. Calling my darling Nest an uncouth female!"

"That's as barbarous as her own name appears to be. What did you call her, Frank?"

"Nest, my dear cousin."

"Nest! humph! remarkable name indeed. What Nest does she belong to, Frank?"

"She belongs to my Nest; but I grant it is rather an odd name. She is descended from some Welsh Princess of that name."

"Humph! Nest Jones!" continued the Duke, as if to himself. "Oh, no! I forgot her name is Herbert. Nest Herbert! Well, I like the name, it's singular; she seems altogether rather singular, this little Welsh thing of yours, Frank."

"She is," said Frank, "singular in beauty,

grace, and goodness, and in history. Her father was the celebrated Colonel Herbert, who distinguished himself so much in the Peninsular war, and married into one of the oldest families in Wales. Not long after my Nest was born, he went to visit the slate quarries, with a view to working them, his wife and brother being with him, as well as some other relation. By some strange fatality, they got upon the workings of an old mine; these four, with the steward, and two other people. The ground gave way beneath their feet, and they were precipitated into an old pit. Colonel Herbert was the sole person taken out alive, and he did not survive the accident six months, being very much injured. His little girl he left to the care of an old and valued friend of his wife's, who had, indeed, been a sort of mother to her, and who has since been a mother, or grandmother, as she calls her, to my Nest."

"Well! that is an odd history—a whole family, as it were, swallowed up. It would

have sounded more romantic had he been killed in the wars, and she died of grief after him, or if all the family had been swallowed up by an earthquake. However, we will make the best we can of the story, and think only of the survivor. So your little Nest, (Nestling would be better, I think), is pretty?"

"Pretty, by no means expresses what she is," said Frank, eagerly; "neither is she little."

"Oh! I meant no offence by saying little; it was rather a *nom de caresse*. But now that you are something cooler, my dear Frank, let me hear what you want me to do about your mother."

"Of course! I want her to seek a new home. I want my house to myself, now I am going to be a family man."

"I think you very wise, Frank."

"And though he is my mother's husband, I have no regard for that fellow Malcolm, but shall be heartily glad to get rid of him."

"Still wiser, my dear Frank."

"I have no objection to give a home to poor little Minni, my mother behaves so confoundedly ill to her; but I won't house that cringing, fawning, odious governess."

"Most wise, Frank."

"Neither will I have Augusta; she would make mischief between a blind mole and a deaf rat. I grant I am rather in a hurry, but I think if I give them all six months to move, that's quite enough."

"Quite sufficient, my dear boy. Well, I suppose you want me to tell them this. But suppose they will not go?"

"I can never believe my mother's pride will suffer her to remain, when she knows she is not wanted. Besides, my wife will be mistress, and that she never will endure."

"I shall think much more kindly of her pride than I ever did before, if it urges her to leave you and your house free, Frank. But she is in a deuce of a way about your marriage."

"I know she is, and that extraordinary silly

woman, my aunt, is worse. She wrote me the most ridiculous letter you ever read."

"Come, speak more respectfully of my intended, young man."

"Your intended! cousin, never; you know you hate her more than any one."

"No, there is one other person I dislike more at present, though I dare say if Lady Julia insists upon marrying me by force, I may hate her the most, in the end. But before we finish our confab, rely upon my doing my best with your mother, both from affection for you, regard for Miss Jones (Herbert I mean), and from principle. I hold it perfectly wicked, for two establishments to reign in the same house."

## CHAPTER X.

Lord Gomer did not long trouble his mother with his presence, or indulge her with any more of his confidence. While she, on her part, having delivered herself of her opinions and intentions, deemed there was no further necessity for her to mention the matter.

She concluded, of course, that her son would pay her the implicit deference he had always done, and listened therefore in disdainful silence to all the Duke's advice. In vain he hinted as to the desirable situation of one house, the salubrity of another, the beauty of a

third, the incompatibility of two establishments in one house, the wisdom of leaving young people to themselves, the amusement of making a new home, the pleasure of embellishing a place of your own. He might as well have advised York Minster to move, as Lady Jane.

It was her usual habit to be disdainfully silent, after a fit of ill humour; for being generally in the wrong, and as generally in wilful ignorance of the fact, it spared her a great deal of, perhaps remorse, or, at all events, words of explanation, while those around her gladly endured the silence, as these words of explanation proved often more galling than the passion that caused them. According to the fit of ill humour, so did the fit of silence last; and it was not to be wondered at, that "the days of grace" allowed the inhabitants of Gomer should this time be long and profound.

Nevertheless it proved unfortunate for Lady Jane herself. She awoke early one morning

with an amazed impression on her mind that some noise had had the audacity to intrude upon her hearing organs, and disturbed her slumbers.

Certainly, as one sense after another became conscious, cannon were firing and joy-bells ringing.

Hastily summoning her maid, she broke the long silence of monosyllables, by demanding the reason of such extraordinary sounds. The maiden wisely fled, after informing her that it was my Lord Gomer's wedding-day, and all the world were rejoicing in mad felicity.

Then Lady Jane made up for her long silence, and the veriest horse-boy in the stables grew privy to her feelings on the occasion. But though they were so decidedly unfavourable, and so universally known and expressed, nobody seemed in the least to participate in them. For a week the domain of Gomer was mad with merriment and jollity, and for a week Lady Jane was mad with grief and rage.

It is as well to draw a veil over such scenes. Language would but faintly describe them, while gentle natures would derive no pleasure from the perusal.

"There being no help for it," the Duke's only piece of consolation to Lady Jane, did not convey any relief to her mind. On the contrary, the impotency of her wrath left a deeper wound in her heart, and made it rankle and fester there with stronger animosity. Matters were not mended, when after saying in her usual arbitrary stately way to the good Duchess,

"Of course the infatuated young couple are gone abroad. I trust Lord Gomer has sufficient sense left to give his plebeian bride a year's polishing on the continent."

"No, really," she mildly answered. "I am commissioned by Frank to tell you, that he means to be at home in a month from his marriage."

"I will not receive her, I will not suffer such an indignity."

"Then, Jane, I am further commissioned to tell you, that any other of his houses is at your disposal, and you are to give all the orders that you think fit, to prepare it for your reception."

"I shall do no such thing. I do not intend to leave Gomer; I am not going to be driven away by a vulgar Welshwoman."

"You must nevertheless make up your mind to your son and his wife coming here. That cannot be prevented. It remains only for you to settle with yourself whether you will receive them properly, or leave them their home to themselves. And I strongly advise the latter."

Now had the Duchess been as worldly wise as she was heavenly good, she would not have said the last few words. It was not, however, to be expected that her guileless nature would comprehend the quirks and oddities that pervaded my Lady Jane's mind. But that little piece of advice confirmed the latter lady in her determination of "standing her ground."

"Was she, the descendant of eleven Dukes,

with a dash of royal blood in her veins (no matter how it was got), with feelings, heart, and education, that elevated her so immeasurably above all common mortals, with beauty and manners fit only for such a high station, to be put down, turned out, driven away by a common Welsh girl! Forbid it, all the eleven dead Dukes! Forbid it, ye drops of royal blood! Forbid it, reason, sense, pride and station!"

And while fanning herself into a fancied state of coolness, suddenly a brilliant idea rushed into her head, which did more to calm her irritated feelings than aught else, as yet.

She would have her revenge—a very pretty, soothing revenge. The very day that Lord Gomer returned with his plebeian bride, she would give a fête, a ball, a brilliant reception. She would invite the country round, the highest, the noblest, the most wealthy, She prided herself (and not unjustly) on the grace and dignity with which she did the honours of her magnificent castle; and the world should judge and

see the difference between the high-born courtly lady, who had presided there so long in queen-like dignity, and the country maiden that was to take her place. She taxed her brains to remember all that she had heard of her son's wife, and pleased herself with thinking that, little as it was, the only impression left on her mind was, that she was a simple, quiet country girl. She grew almost happy in the thought of the annihilating reception she would bestow upon the baby beauty, whom she knew, by instinct, that her son had chosen; while all Yorkshire should judge of the magnificent, the regal manner in which she exerted herself to receive the new Lady Gomer.

As this plan matured itself in her mind, many others grew upon it. The fête should be one unrivalled even in Yorkshire; the world would be fascinated with her sweetness and urbanity, and the noble manner in which she received the person who was to displace her. But, above all, the young, unexperienced, simple

bride, should be at once, and so for ever, overwhelmed, smothered, and bewildered with the grandeur, the magnificence, the whirl of her reception, that putting her royal foot upon her (in metaphorical phrase), Lady Jane would keep it there, and under plea of youth and incapacity, reign in Gomer more potently than ever. Acting on such impulses, it was no wonder that she bewildered the Duchess and astounded the Duke, with the amount of her preparations to welcome her son and his bride to their princely home.

With strong misgivings as to what spirit was moving her, they felt equally disturbed, in thinking how Frank and his young simple bride would like being thus fêted on their first arrival at home.

"My dear mother," said the Duke, "do you know where the happy pair are honey-mooning at present? for I really think it would be but charitable to give them notice of what is going to happen to them, on their arrival at home. I

fancy when I marry my Miss Jones, I should like to bring her to the home in which we are to spend our lives together, and act all those little domestic tragedies and comedies that I suppose one must;—I say, I should like to bring her home! Home, in its proper sense, home. I should like her to see it, divested of every extraneous ornament or attraction; no one in it but myself. Dearest mother, do you think Frank has any such sentimental thought in him?"

"I should think so, Elmore. And I have tried to reason with Jane, to no purpose. I appealed to her good-nature, and begged her not to overwhelm a young and timid bride with such a reception."

"I would not have appealed to her good-nature, mother, because I doubt her having any. But it is very unfortunate for them, poor souls! and if I thought I could find them, I would set off to let them know what was going on. I should rather enjoy their coming the day before, or the day after the fête."

"I have no doubt you would, you foolish Elmore."

"Because, my dear mother, I fancy Lady Jane is actuated by no good motive, and I enjoy seeing miserable minds like hers disappointed. At all events, we can do one thing—we can mark our disapproval, by not going to the fête ourselves."

"I also thought of that, my son. But as our absence will not stop the fête, and as we do not know what she may not be going to inflict upon the young couple, I have since thought it would be kinder towards them, to go."

"My dearest mother, you have decided, as you always do, most kindly. We will go. For though I am not particularly interested about the bride, (for, with the waywardness of my wicked nature, now that she has proved so rich, so good, and not Miss Jones, I have lost the little I felt)—we shall be on the spot if Lady Jane shows fight, and scratches her, or any other untoward event occurs. I have heard say, that

Welsh blood is very irascible, and the bride may retaliate. And though one cannot expect much glory in the encounter, at all events, I shall brace up my nerves and sinews to assist Frank. He is an object of much commiseration at present."

## CHAPTER XI.

THE preparations went on; neither expense or trouble was spared, but it was all for the high and noble. No day of rejoicing was to be given the poor; the villagers were to be silent and forgotten, the tenants were to keep themselves at home, and quiet.

"It could be nothing to them," said Lady Jane, and she could hear of no expense being thrown away on those sorts of people. Nevertheless, under the guidance of the good Vicar, preparations were making of quite a different kind to Lady Jane's, and with the concurrence

of the Duke of Nairn, the tenants of Gomer entered into a subscription, which, while it showed their love and hopes in their young landlord, gave promise that the poorest person about them should rejoice on that day. But, of course, these preparations being quite opposite to the other ones, Lady Jane never even heard of them; and even if she had, was much too busy to care about them.

The day approached, that day, which should witness her triumph, for nothing had as yet failed her in all she planned.

The day approached, that day, which was to pour balm into many fainting hearts, to rise and set with the weal or woe of Gomer gathered in its hours.

The day arrived, the company gathered fast. Arrayed with almost regal magnificence, without a ruffle on her brow, with winning smiles and courteous speech, Lady Jane received the high, well-born, wealthy neighbours abounding in the county of York.

The noble hall was filled with rank, beauty, and magnificence, upon which, as the Lady Jane gazed, her heart swelled with triumph, and then contracted, as the cause of all occurred to her. Her courtesy and smiling demeanour were, of course, assumed, for even her cold heart and iron nerves were agitated at present.

She felt how unlike a kind and considerate mother she was acting; and Frank, inheriting his father's passionate temper, might cause a scene, the reverse of what she was anticipating. It was therefore, with most unwonted trepidation that she heard the distant boom of cannon, which announced that son's approach. The joy-bells rang out merrily, and even in that vast hall, through the numerous rooms and thick walls, they could hear the tumultuous roar of assembled multitudes. She rose, she sat down, she turned red, then white, and felt that should these unusual sensations last much longer, she, the proud, cold, stately

Lady Jane must choke or faint. She could not raise her eyes to the great doors, upon which she knew all other eyes must now be fixed, expecting the advent of the happy pair; but they waited in vain.

The tumultuous sounds of welcome rose higher and louder outside, but solemn silence and expectation alone filled the spacious hall, with its glittering company. Lady Jane nerved herself to ring the bell. A groom of the chambers entered, who, whispering a communication to her Ladyship, retired.

With sparkling eyes, and all her pride gathered like a mantle around her, Lady Jane beckoned to the Duke.

"Lord Gomer, after speaking to the rabble outside, and ordered them some—I don't know what — refreshments, has retired to his own rooms, and does not intend honouring this noble company with his presence."

"I don't blame him," said the Duke; "perhaps he naturally thought his mother would

go out to welcome her daughter home, as well as the rabble."

"I have but two daughters, my Lord Duke, and they are both here; but I beseech you go to my Lord Gomer, and remonstrate with him. It will be an insult not only to me, but to the present company, whom I have gathered together to do him honour, if he does not appear."

"I will go," said the Duke, "and say, if he appears, it will be quite sufficient; we will spare the Lady Gomer."

Lady Jane winced at the name, nevertheless she said,—

"Of course, I should consider her deficient in common courtesy, if she did not honour us also with her presence."

## CHAPTER XII.

The Duke found Lord Gomer pacing up and down his own peculiar apartments with the hasty, irregular strides of a man in a passion. Wisely considering he had great cause for being so, he thought it would be a politic measure to join him, and enter the lists in his favour.

For oftentimes when a little opposition is given to a man in a rage, under the mistaken idea of soothing him, it but adds fuel to the flames already blazing. Whereas a contrary course answers the purpose of making the larger

fire put out the lesser. And this was so, in the case of Lord Gomer.

The natural and warmly expressed indignation of his kind cousin had a most soothing effect; and perceiving that he was getting into a reasonable state, the Duke proceeded to say,

"My mother and I (entering fully into your feelings about bringing your wife to her new home in peace and quiet) declined coming at first. But seeing your mother so set upon this grand reception, we thought, as relatives, it would be as well to be on the spot, to assist you two ensnared pigeons. For though I don't presume to think that Lady Jane cares two straws for me individually, it is against her principles to contradict a Duke."

This latter sentence was said rather *sotto voce;* but Frank had so cooled down, under the influence of his kind sympathy, that after thanking him, he professed himself willing to be guided by his advice.

"Well," said the Duke, with an inward chuckle at his success, and a mental hint not to be too precipitate, and lose his vantage ground—"I would in your place do just as I felt inclined. To be sure, the company assembled to do you honour, are all your neighbours of the highest rank and consideration (your mother can well be trusted to select her company). They might think it a little strange, were you to decline appearing."

"But they are not my guests, Elmore; it was not I who invited them."

"True; but we were all invited to meet you, and do your bride honour; and perhaps myself and my mother are the only guests present, who are aware that it was not by special invite from you, that we are thus in your house. I fancy some of the guests will be inclined to order their carriages, when they discover the real state of the case. Then imagine my Lady Jane's state of mind."

"I can imagine it very well," said Frank,

his cheek flushing, "but remember my wife has had a long journey, and is tired. It is hard to ask her to dress and appear before such company unprepared."

And Frank unconsciously laid bare before the keen eyes of his cousin, one reason of his annoyance.

"Ah!" said he to himself, "Miss Jones is a little country bumpkin after all, and Frank wants a little preparation to prepare her innocent little unsophisticated mind for the grandeurs of Gomer, ere he shows her to the world. I am very sorry for them both, poor young souls!"

While Frank was thinking of the little tired, pale wife he had lifted out of the carriage, and all the tender thoughts she had been indulging in, regarding the unknown mother and sisters she was expecting to embrace. Besides, he had never seen her in august company, if it might so be called; and under the combined influence of fatigue, tender feelings, and surprise, he could

hardly imagine how one so young and simple would comport herself on the occasion. Therefore, no wonder his brow again contracted, and he began again his irritable walk to and fro.

"Suppose," said the Duke, waking up from his reverie, "you go and ask her, Frank; and if she is decisive on the subject, we can but make her excuses."

Frank sullenly obeyed, and walking into the next room, was apparently met by some one who loved him, for Elmore heard the sound of an undoubted salute, while a low, gentle voice said, "I have heard all, Frank, and if you think I need not dress very elaborately, I shall be ready in twenty minutes, and we will go down to this company."

"But, my dearest, you are so pale and tired."

"Oh, never mind that; I perhaps need not stay long."

"But I must have you look well, Nest."

"So I will, dear Frank—at all events, I will

look happy; happy, because we shall be pleasing your mother."

"Take more time to dress, Nessie."

"No, no, that will be quite sufficient time to keep them all waiting. Now, if you stay here, Frank, I shall be ready sooner than you."

"I will go, my Nessie; and thank you, dear, for being so amiable."

The Duke having overheard all, merely waited to tell Frank that he would inform Lady Jane of their intention, and then left, saying to himself, "I like the voice of Miss Jones (Herbert I mean) much. Also she is not selfish; also she is not given to much adorning of apparel. All three good things. Nevertheless, I hope she will not come down a dowdy. Would it be well if I gave a hint of the magnificent toilets below, and the regal appearance of my Lady Jane? No! I think not! people may get into an ill-humour waiting much longer; besides, that sweet voice must belong to something lady-like, at all events."

Advancing to Lady Jane, on his return to her presence, he said aloud, "Your son and daughter will be down in twenty minutes, and at his request, I have desired Jervois to serve the banquet in that time."

How Lady Jane passed the next half hour she could hardly tell, for though her proud spirit rose within her, adding unusual haughtiness to her already stately bearing, yet a mist came over her eyes as the door opened, and in loud (and to her it seemed in mocking) tones, the groom of the chambers announced,

"My Lord and Lady."

She caught one glimpse of her son's face, with the traces yet on it of anger and annoyance. She felt he was making his way straight to her, and that the courtly crowd opened to suffer the son to present his wife to her new mother.

Nerving herself, therefore, she rose majestically, without looking up; and as he said, in a voice plainly indicative of his mixed feelings,

"Mother, I introduce to you my wife," she proceeded to perform an elaborate curtsey, befitting royalty itself; which act she had long premeditated, should at once electrify, and, if possible, petrify, the plebeian daughter-in-law. But ere she had half accomplished it, her hand was taken, and gently kissed. Raising her eyes in astonishment, she beheld a vision so unlike anything her imagination had ever pictured, that she and her half-performed curtsey remained transfixed in wonder.

A fair young girl stood before her, dressed in a simple white robe, which, gathered in round her slight waist, floated in clear, ample folds down to the ground. A ruby brooch of extreme value and brilliancy fastened the dress round the small white throat.

Her waving masses of dark hair had been smoothed over her forehead with water, and, through the hastiness of her toilette, the sparkling drops yet remained on it, shining like minute stars.

The slender beauty of her figure; the loveliness of her face; the flowing, spotless robes; and, above all, the radiant star-like eyes, fixed with such beseeching love on the Lady Jane, made her imagine that some young angel had strayed from heaven, and wandered by mistake into the gorgeous company. The fair lids drooped as the Lady Jane's eyes remained fixed so steadily on her, and, blushing deeply, Nest retreated to her husband's arm, where clinging, she half bent her lovely head against his shoulder, with an inimitable mixture of grace and shyness.

Frank saw his mother's unmistakable look of amazed admiration, he heard murmurs of delight around him, he looked down with proud affection on the lovely creature clinging to him, and with a rush of exultation in his heart, all his good humour returned.

The folding doors opened wide, displaying the blazing lights and magnificent repast, the glitter of glass and plate, the rich hues of bright

flowers, the long rows of liveried servants, waiting to serve them.

"Pray, my dear mother," said he, "take your usual seat. I trust my kind friends will allow my wife to sit by me to-night, being so great a stranger to you all."

The Lady Jane performed the usual duties of the lady of the mansion, and marshalled her guests into the magnificent dining-hall, with her usual pride and stateliness. She followed them, leaning on the arm of her relative, the Duke of Nairn (as his rank decreed him), with the queen-like air of power and possession, that she knew so well how to assume. Nothing seemed likely to mar the beauty of her fête, no untoward event to hurt her pride; no shock to spoil the grandeur of the effect. And yet she only felt it was so, her mind remained transfixed still upon the fair young vision she had seen. Perhaps she only recovered her senses, when missing the Duke from her side.

After the confusion of sitting down, through the long vista of lamps, glasses, plate, and porcelain, she beheld him seated by the new Lady Gomer.

## CHAPTER XIII.

It was some time before the shy, fawn-like eyes of Nest trusted themselves to do more than partially glance around her.

But her taste for the beautiful, (the gorgeous scene before her being a sort of realization of scenes in the Arabian Nights' Tales) and her wish to gaze upon the face belonging to the kind, cheery voice on her right side, made her at last look up.

Excepting her own Frank, there was not any face up and down that long table that she liked so much as her neighbour's.

He was so handsome, bore himself with an air so aristocratic, his smile was so sunny, that as she for the third time caught his bright blue eyes fixed upon her, she could hardly help smiling.

"Ah! now I am pleased to see those dimples," said he. "You begin to feel more comfortable, and at home, I trust."

"No, not much," she said, blushing, "I feel rather in a maze of magic. This room is so beautiful, the lights are so brilliant, and the company so gorgeously arrayed, that I feel something as if I was a little daisy, misplaced amid the rarest and most resplendent flowers."

"The humble daisy can be misplaced no where, to an English eye; nevertheless I like your fanciful idea, and instead of a little daisy, I shall compare you to the pure Stephanotus flower. Though I have been thinking for some time that you are the Peri, who, after gaining admittance into heaven, have visited us once more, to collect our tears of penitence."

"Have you many for me?" she said, irresistibly urged on to be happy, by his pleasant, frank manner.

"Yes, very many, and one is quite a lake of a tear, for breaking the tenth commandment. But would you not like to know whom all your guests are? Who are related to you, and who are not? You may safely ask me, and still more safely criticise if you wish it, for I am only nearly related to one person in the room."

"I know who that is," said Nest, archly; "she sits on Frank's right hand in a black velvet dress, with fair hair, and she has a cross of large and costly diamonds."

"Now, how came you to guess so well? Do you perceive a likeness between us?"

"No, but she looks at you with mother eyes. See, they speak to you now, and say, 'My dear son.'"

"And do you think I return the look as a dear son should?"

"I think you would, if you were alone, you would perhaps take her hand gently and kiss it, saying in return for her look of love, 'my honoured mother.'"

The bright blue eyes looked down into those earnest dark grey ones, with something of surprise as he said in answer,

"Ha! I see you are more keen than shy. I must beware of so much penetration, hidden under the white lids of demureness. But, pray tell me, do you see the mother eyes in Lady Jane?"

"She is not like what I expected," said Nest, her eyes drooping, "she is so young and beautiful."

"Will you change mothers with me?" said her neighbour, quietly.

"I have never had a mother, and may not perhaps know how to appreciate such love, as I think your mother would bestow on a child."

"But your mother has the advantage in beauty."

"Nay, every face has its attraction and

beautiful expression is the most to be worshipped, I think."

"You have proved yourself very penetrating so far, Lady Gomer, but can you tell who, amid all this gay company, is your sister?"

"Yes, I could not mistake her, for she is so like her mother. Besides, she is sitting by Sir John West."

"Ah! you know him."

"Yes, but where is my other sister?"

"Do you like him?"

"Sir John? I do not know enough of him; but I cannot find my sister Mimi."

"Very good, very good, really I am fain to think you the little Peri. For Sir John is just what you think he is, and your sister Mimi is not present. Lady Jane thinks her too young for such a scene."

— "Frank tells me she is older than I am."

"I dare say she is, but Lady Jane considers her but a baby still, and so will you, when you see her, poor little unfortunate. I want

to bespeak your kind offices for her; she has been"—But Nest was not attending to what he said; her eyes were wandering from face to face in a perplexed manner.

"You are looking for some one in particular," he said.

"Yes, for the Duke of Nairn, but I cannot see any one whom I should like to be him. Frank says," she continued, raising her large eyes to his face, "of all the people,—Ah! I have guessed, I know him;" a radiant smile gave birth to a sunny light over her whole countenance, nevertheless a pure earnest look glanced from her eyes, as, involuntarily holding out both hands, she said,—"Frank says you will be my brother."

"I will, I will, God helping me," he said, and he warmly pressed her hands in return.

He was deeply moved, while she blushed crimson, and said, "Pray excuse me, but you know I am only a country girl, and have not learnt to repress what I feel."

"Pray be not other than you are, and to me, remember, your brother, I shall expect you always to say what you think."

"I promise I will not forget. I will say to myself that I shall not deserve to have a brother, such a brother as Frank says you will be, if I do not regard him as one."

"Thanks, little sister; for my part, I wish the time was come, that I might show my fraternal care."

"Indeed I should like to prove it now, and will ask you at once, if it would appear strange for me to retire, after this banquet is over?"

"I think no one can expect you to remain: you have had a long journey—you know no one, and you don't care to sit half the night through, to be stared at."

"Yes. I feel a little distressed at the number of eyes pointed, as it seems to me, more critically than kindly."

"Too true; of all ordeals the most pain-

ful, the undisguised stare of aristocratic eyes is the worst. You may be sure they will do as they please, so why should not you?"

"But my—that is—Lady Jane?"

"Ask Frank what he wishes, and abide by that."

It was agreed between them, that she should retire, for the festivities of the evening were to end with a ball, and Nest was clearly equal to no further fatigue.

In spite of the Duke's defalcation from her side, in spite of the friendship he seemed to be making with the new Lady Gomer, Lady Jane was in high spirits.

She had not been dethroned, her banquet had passed off with a brilliance and *eclât* scarcely equalled. Nothing had occurred to mar the effect of it; no untoward event had happened to spoil its beauty. Now and then, when her heart was lifted up at the pomp and state, the rank and beauty that surrounded her—she recalled to her mind the image of almost

ethereal beauty that had stood before her, for a moment. And that without a pang. For it was a beauty that could enter into no rivalship with hers, they were so different. A fair and lovely child had assumed to be mistress of Gomer; a gentle, girlish spirit had come among them with the semblance of power. It should be Lady Jane's business to let her keep the semblance, while she herself ruled with more determination than ever.

A new child was given her, over whom she could reign with the same potent sway she had always shown to the three she already possessed.

Under the influence of these feelings, Lady Jane shewed her happiness and content, by a greater assumption of dignity, and a queen-like condescension, that was rare to behold in her. She grew also impatient to gaze once more upon that lovely face, and felt real pleasure in the thought that Frank had possessed himself of such a phœnix of beauty. The buzz

of admiration that had greeted Lady Gomer's first appearance, was duly appreciated by her. Now that she was convinced no rivalship could exist between them, no fight for power was likely to ensue, she left the banqueting-hall swelling with self-delight, and benign with her patronizing intentions towards Lady Gomer, and was therefore almost as much surprised as at their first meeting, at her daughter-in-law's conduct.

Murmuring a few words of thanks for the elaborate speech of praise, of which Lady Jane was delivering herself, beseeching excuse more by her eyes than words, Nest curtsied lovely and gracefully, and vanished. Vanished, while Lady Jane was speaking!

"She is lovely; more so than I first thought, and graceful, but wants dignity and manners! quite a child." Thus soliloquised Lady Jane, as, during the remainder of the evening's festivities, she walked amid her courtly guests, dis-

pensing her smiles and civilities, with a grace and dignity none could assume as she did.

And when, wearied at last, she was permitted to lay her head on her pillow, she sank to sleep, with nothing but satisfaction in her heart.

## CHAPTER XIV.

WHILE music was playing, light hearts dancing, and the whole house in the height of festivities, the weary Nest was pining to be alone; alone, that she might think. To a tender and sensitive heart, many emotions would naturally rise, on coming for the first time, under such circumstances, home. For in that word, Nest included as many pleasures to be enjoyed, as duties to be performed. Home was to be her battle-field, in which she was to fight the war of life, and win the crown of immortality, promised to all created beings.

For one so young, she was naturally thought-

ful, or rather reflective. Her history and education had combined to foster this habit.

The strange and melancholy loss of both parents, before she ever knew them, without a brother, sister, or near relative of any kind—she seemed isolated from the rest of the world, with a fund of warm and deep affections filling her heart. Living with her aged adopted grandmother on the wild coast of Wales, she had few companions of any kind, much less young ones. And yet an innocent, gay spirit dwelt within her, that only needed congenial soil in which to expand.

Bur perhaps her habits of thought and reflection had assumed a stronger and higher cast, through the long unwearied hours that she spent on the sea-shore.

There the wonders of the ocean grew into her nature. She loved the pure, calm sea, as it lovingly and gently cast its tiny waves in liquid silver at her feet.

She wondered at the dark grey beauty of the

swelling mountains, that rose, as the wind swept over them, cresting each with the white mane of a war-horse. She looked with awe and admiration at the wild uproar of the tempest, and heard the voice of God in the hollow boom of the sea—felt His mighty power in the resistless force of the waves. The Sea was her playfellow, her only companion—sometimes looking at her with the smile of childhood, anon with the grave, calm aspect of an older friend, then he filled her soul with thoughts of the mighty power of the great Creator. Thus her mind grew and expanded, with the broad, rich, boundless feelings of a mighty ocean; her heart strengthened with its wonders and beauty, and her soul was filled with the fervour of a young and grateful spirit, while she retained an almost childish simplicity of manner and appearance. A harsh word she had never heard; an untruth she could not comprehend; she felt that her lips could not say what her heart did not mean.

A passionate temper she would have pitied; a mean spirit she could not have understood; while all that was noble, good, and excellent found a ready echo in her exquisite nature.

It was the fine, frank, generous spirit of Lord Gomer, beaming from his eyes, that had thus taken possession of a heart, in which slumbered high purposes, pure motives, and undaunted principles.

And this love was strong; it combined all those affections, that hitherto had dwelt within that pure heart, unfed, unknown. And this day she had found, in the enthusiastic reception given them by the tenants and inhabitants of Gomer, how worthy was this object of her sole affections, how beloved was her husband, her own Frank.

While her eyes overflowed at the spontaneous uproar of their hearts' welcome, she sent many a mental prayer to Heaven, that she might be

worthy to assist him, in making his people happy.

Nevertheless, a weight was on her spirits, a cloud upon her mind. Little as she could understand the broad Yorkshire dialect, there was a blunt sincerity, which unmistakably spoke of wrong among some of them.

About twelve miles from Gomer, they had been met by a troop of mounted tenants; and from that place, until they reached their home, their progress resembled a triumphal march. Repeatedly was the carriage stopped by the eager and excited crowd, while at no time could they proceed beyond a slow trot.

But, amid all the hurrahing, cheering, and congratulation, it appeared to Nest, that a deep under-current of suppressed feeling now and then broke through all restraint.

While her heart beat with pleasure at the fond, endearing epithets they bestowed upon their lord, it contracted again, at the startling

energy of some of the people, crying for justice, clinging to the carriage. Many anxious, eager faces surrounded them, while some with mournful earnestness would say,

"My lord, my lord! welcome, welcome! oh stoiy wi us, boide wi yer ain foilks! For the Lord's sake, leave us not mair!"

Others would exclaim,

"God bless her sweet leddyship! the Lord send she has noi proide! Oh, my leddy, if ye are as guid as ye luik, we moiy be hoippy agin. God send we the oild times, wi' a Leddy Gomer loike oure ould one! Doone wi proide, rule us yerself, my lord, wi'll thole and work well; but gie us noa Leddy Janes. Hoorooh! hoorooh! we hoi our ain young lord agin. Hoorooh! hoorooh! wi'll hae justice and peace, nae mair lip service, nae mair black dealings. For the Lord's sake, my leddy, keep wi ous. Doint ye leave yer ain people; doint ye let ony one be a go-between twixt my lord and ous, but yer ainsel,

my leddy. Welcome, welcome hoime! we are a'most worn out wi wrang and thole, but hoorooh! hoorooh! we have our ain agin."

But though this was not half that was poured into their ears, and even this almost unintelligible to Nest, the wan, wretched look of the people helped to enlighten her. The eagerness of the women to look at her, the constant cry, "Let's see my leddy's face, has she any proide?" the heart-felt way they congratulated each other, as they saw her pitying look, and watched the tears that rose unbidden to her eyes;—all this told a tale to the sensitive girl, that in some degree prepared her for the cold and mocking reception she had received from Lady Jane. Lady Jane, the mother, that mother she had been longing to embrace, and already in imagination loved.

The imagination of youth floats on clouds of gold, purple and azure, gilding their anticipa-

tions, so that realities seldom reach the mind's picture.

Thus Nest was prepared for the magnificence of her new home; and though she might have been startled by the gorgeous scene into which she had been so unexpectedly ushered, it left no further impression on her mind than a beautiful picture or illuminated tale. The sad realities forced themselves upon her, her heart grew heavy; a vision of trials, difficulties, troubles, began to rise like one cloud upon another; and her first evening at home might have ended very differently to what she had fondly expected, had not her mind been recalled to itself, by a noise at her door.

A pettish, peevish voice exclaimed outside,—

"I tell you I will go in. You nasty thing! you shan't stop me; every body has seen her, and so will I."

A harsh voice replied, "You shall do nothing of the sort. Come away immediately—I wonder at you."

"You are a hateful creature," said the first voice, "and I will go."

Nest rose and opened the door. Before her stood two females; one, old and sallow, but dressed in ribbons, trinkets, and ringlets, as if but eighteen. Heavy, leaden eyes, reminded one of a bloated fish, with no ideas beyond the mud in which it revelled.

The other was a young, untidy, unkempt, unwholesome-looking girl, whose golden hair and blue eyes might have claimed admiration under any other circumstances. They started both, at the fair pale apparition in the doorway.

"Are you my new sister?" said the soft, flute-like voice of Nest.

"I don't know," said the girl, with her unwashed finger in her mouth.

"Are you Mimi?" again said Nest.

"Yes."

Nest advanced, and kissed her heartily, saying to the elderly female, "I am Lady Gomer. May my sister sit with me a while?"

Grunting out an assent, without removing the leaden eyes, which were trying to express astonishment, Nest drew her sister in and shut the door, leaving the governess still in a state of coma.

"I was determined I would see you," said Amelia, with boisterous triumph, as they sat down together in Nest's room. "Mamma was so cross, she would not let me appear at the banquet, so I determined I would spite her somehow; and the moment I heard from the maids that you had come to your own room, I knew it would vex her more than any thing, if I came to see you."

"No, no," murmured Nest, "not that; you came to see if you could love me, and be my sister."

"To be sure I can, and to be sure I will; I love every thing that Frank loves, for he is the only person that ever speaks a kind word to me in this hateful place. But I should love

you without that, you are so pretty. I never saw any one like you before. Everybody says mamma is beautiful. Bother her beauty! she looks very often like an old cat, and spits like one too, when she is angry."

"Hush! oh hush!" said Nest.

"Oh, you will soon know mamma as well as I do, and then you will hate her as much. But take some of my *bonbons*; I only give this sort to people I like, and I am sure I shall like you. Mamma hates you already, before she saw you, so you need not be scrupulous. I sometimes eat a whole paper a-day of this kind. How very pretty you are; I am so glad of it, for mamma will look a fright by you."

"Mimi, I am shocked—pray don't."

"Are you? Well! you look quite frightened. Come, I won't say any more then, for I want you to love me. I wish to live with you and Frank; but you'll both be clever, if you get rid of mamma and her old Malcolm. They don't

intend to budge, I know; and you'll have rare fights—it will be such fun !"

Nest's eyes began to fill with tears; every feeling of love, tenderness, right, propriety, were being outraged. She looked at her new sister, as if expecting her to turn into some ferocious animal.

"Don't, oh! don't look at me so, pretty sister," said the wild girl; "I really will say no more. How tender-hearted you are. How good you look. Here! take some more of these sugar-plums (cramming them into her mouth). Frank will tell you, I am not a bad girl in heart, but one very much to be pitied. A poor girl, who has had nothing to love or care for; a poor neglected thing, who has hitherto only lived to be trodden upon. When I said I wanted you to love me, that I might live with you, something tells me that if you can love me, it will be a happy thing for me. Ah! what eyes you have, like holy stars; love me with those

eyes, sister, and then guide me as you will."

Nest rested her dark hair for a moment, in a caressing way, against Mimi's golden locks, but her heart was too full to speak.

"I will go away now, sister, for I am sure you must be tired. I am very thoughtless, and I believe very wicked; but if you will promise to try and love me, I will promise to try and be good."

"I promise," murmured Nest, in her ear.

"Then may I come to you soon in the morning? May I go out with you? May I show you my horse and puppies, and such a darling little pig?"

"Yes, I will go with you."

"Then here, take some more of these—eat them all. I don't like leaving you, I love you already. I never heard such a soft, dream-like voice. It seems to me, that I must obey its softest whisper. I am going—I am going. I see how pale and tired you are, but I feel I am

going into a bad world, leaving you. You will promise to try and love me?"

"Yes, truly."

"I wish it was to-morrow. I wish it was eight o'clock to-morrow;" and vehemently kissing her new sister, Mimi at last tore herself away.

The over-wrought heart could think no more. Ringing for her maid, Nest mechanically prepared for rest; laying her bewildered head upon her pillow, two quick tears stole down her cheeks, but she was hardly conscious of them, sinking at once into deep repose.

When Frank was released from his duties down stairs, he came and gazed upon that lovely face, looking so calm and childlike in her sleep, the sweet breath coming so regularly between the parted lips. And he saw the stain of the tears.

Instead of gently kissing them away, and mentally breathing a prayer to Heaven that she should shed no more, if he could help it, a

flush of anger rushed over his countenance, and he muttered between his teeth, "This is my mother's doing!"

So he laid down to sleep, in a rage.

## CHAPTER XV.

MANY of the guests remained all night at Gomer Castle, so that there was a large and formidable party at breakfast on the following morning, and nearly all had assembled ere Lord Gomer appeared.

"Pray, where is your wife?" said Lady Jane, with a touch of her usual haughtiness; "we are waiting her presence."

"I left her but a moment ago, with Mimi, in the garden, and here they come," said he.

As he spoke, the two girls might be seen coming along the terrace laden with flowers; and

as they appeared through the folding doors that led by a broad flight of steps from the house to the terrace, Nest seemed more youthful and child-like looking than the evening before.

A large straw hat shaded her fair face, a white morning dress, trimmed with rich lace and blue ribbons, seemed peculiarly to suit the fresh colour and radiant eyes, that her morning's walk had given her.

Frank might have felt inclined to quarrel with the simple, childish figure, as she approached; but, removing the large hat, the broad white forehead and small stately head changed the impression, and the clear eyes looked into his with unmistakable intelligence.

Lady Jane, addressing her daughter with asperity, inquired, "Why she presumed to make her appearance, and who had given her permission to be wandering about at that hour?"

Mimi grew crimson with anger, while Nest said,

"It was my fault, I asked her to show me

the gardens, and we have brought you this rose, mamma."

Half curtseying, she gently laid the rose on Lady Jane's hand, then turning to her husband, looked expressively at the guests assembled.

Frank, interpreting the look, while he apologized for his neglect, introduced her to the company.

The caressing, gentle child changed into a dignified woman, her heightened colour alone showing that she was shy; while she made excuses for her disappearance over-night, with such high-bred courtesy and grace. Lady Jane looked on in amazement and dismay.

Not so the Duke, who had watched the entrance, seen the attempt to conciliate the proud mother, witnessed the change from the humble child into the courteous lady of the mansion.

"Stewart was right," he mentally thought; "in that young thing, what a depth of fine and noble feelings lie. Lady Jane! Lady Jane!

beware! You do not know what a loving heart dwells within that form. Change your manner, proud woman, and the riches of such a nature will be poured out on you. But she sees, she knows what you are. Turn from such love, and you will have to seek for what you now reject; she knows the value of her affections. What a simple, natural grace she has! Frank, Frank, you are a lucky dog!"

At that moment Nest perceived the Duke, as he meditated in a corner. A brilliant look of pleasure flushed her face; again she became a simple child, as she took a rose and presented it to him.

He made suitable and proper inquiries after her health and rest, and then added:—

"But you have not given the prettiest rose."

"No," she said, blushing, and half hesitating. "I want this one—but we are to go to breakfast;" and moving to the seat she had occupied the evening before, she sat down by her husband.

The Duke followed, saying to himself,

"My little sister is a study—I must watch what she does with her rose." Then added, aloud, "I wish you would come with me after breakfast, and be introduced to my mother. It is too fatiguing for her to breakfast with so large a party down stairs; besides, I am not sure, but that her early habits make her like to breakfast at nine instead of ten."

Nest agreed to the proposition; and the meal being ended, without any thing of importance occurring that would warrant recording, they departed for the Duchess's rooms—not, however, before the Duke had seen Frank walk away, with the coveted rose in his button-hole.

"Why, you have given that rose to Frank, my little sister. I have been watching its destination with some jealousy, I can assure you, but I did not perceive you give it him."

"Oh no! Frank would not have liked me to be so foolish before all this company. But

he knew very well it was for him; and when I laid it down on the table, I gave it a little push now and then, until it was very near his plate; then he gave it a little pull, and at last it arrived at its proper destination."

"I rather think when I perpetrate matrimony with my Miss Jones, I should like her to act in a similar manner. But see! my mother,—my adopted sister, I give you a share of her love,—dearest mother, receive the affections of a heart that, methinks, beats with a pulse like your own."

The good Duchess folded the blushing girl in her embrace; such kindly love beaming from her eyes, such caressing words from her lips, that Nest intuitively seemed to feel she was again by her fond old grandmother's side.

Spontaneously her warm, loving nature broke forth, with the natural happiness and hilarity of a youthful heart; she gave way to an over-

flow of delight, and fascinated the kind Duchess with her animated vivacity.

Nest felt as if she was again at Coadmore, where love and approbation alone ruled her actions, and she sat on a stool at her auditor's feet, detailing her past life, clasping her hands with childish pleasure, as she described the beauties of her Welsh home. Then gracefully placing a small finger on the kind knee by which she sat, she detailed the love and virtues of her only friend, her large eyes expanding and growing darker, with the grateful emotions of her heart.

Frank's voice was heard, and Nest sprang to her feet and hastened to join him, with the light swiftness of a vision.

"My dear Elmore," said the Duchess, as the door closed upon her, "what a lovely, fascinating creature! How silent and abstracted you are; why, even my eyes grew young gazing upon her. Every movement is graceful, every

word most lovely from her mouth. Stewart was right; Jane ought to thank God every day, for bestowing such a daughter upon her."

"Mother," said the Duke, breaking up his reverie, half testily, "they don't know the good the gods have sent them. No, not one of them. Frank is smitten with her loveliness, but perceives not the image of heaven dwelling beneath the fair surface. Lady Jane sees not, —nay, Lady Jane indeed! The swarthy Ethiop and the fair Saxon are not more dissimilar in person, than Lady Jane and her new daughter in disposition. Between them, what will not that fine delicate nature have to endure. They may break her heart, but they will never lower it to their standard. God help her! it will be Frank's own fault, if he does not lead the life promised in Paradise, with such an help-meet."

Nest had been called away to pay the

parting devoirs to those of the guests who were leaving.

This she did in a manner so to delight Frank, that as the door closed upon the last one, he folded Nest in his arms, and said,

"No one can now say that my wife is a wild little Welshwoman."

"No," said Mimi, the only person present, in a high state of excitement—"I should like to hear them, that's all. Nice little thing! and so pretty too; and all the people seemed so pleased. Besides, she does everything quite unlike mamma; and is not that nice, Frank? Good morning, I trust we may meet ere long," continued Mimi, imitating her mother; "and if it's some one of consequence, I entreat you to return soon."

"Mimi, Mimi!" said Nest, coaxingly, "some people have one way, some another."

"I should like to know who could like her way—I don't, and I know—"

"Are we not to go and see your horse?"

"Oh yes!" said Mimi, who was so up in stable lore, the mere mention of it drove every other thought from her brain, wild and unsettled in most other things.

## CHAPTER XVI.

In the mean time, the impression made by Nest on her guests was equally favourable. And though she was, perhaps, never made aware of it, we being privileged to enter into every carriage that left, will just take advantage of the fact.

"I really am very much pleased with the young Lady Gomer," said an amiable, stout, pompous old lord, in the first carriage.

"I am delighted with her," said his wife, "and I wish, my dear Mary, you would take example by her. There you are, poking now,

and have such an awkward way of sitting, I am quite provoked by it."

"I am afraid, dear mamma," said Mary, good-humouredly, "I never can make myself like Lady Gomer, though I studied every act of grace."

"Very sensible remark, Mary," said her father; "one rarely sees such a blending of grace and simplicity as she possesses."

"And she has such lovely eyes, papa; they really seem to speak. Did you notice her look, when introduced to that odious Lady Jane?" said Mary.

"I am not at all sorry," said her mother, "that we are going to lose that very disagreeable woman. I have always considered it a penance to go to her grand dull parties; but I fancy we shall have quite a different *régime* now."

"I hope so, I am sure," said Mary; "nice, comfortable, happy parties, with a little dancing to enliven the evening."

"I must say for Lady Jane," replied her father, "that she has always been attentive to the principal drama in her parties, namely, the dinner. She always has an excellent cook."

Two wild girls, with their father, an old admiral, and their brother, a sailor, occupied another carriage.

"Now, midships," said one of the girls to her brother, "did you ever see such a darling as the new Lady Gomer? I declare I could have kissed her, she looked so lovely."

"So could I," replied midships, gravely.

"Oh! you impudent boy," said the other sister; "but did she not look pretty last night, amid all those fine people, in her simple white dress? And though it was only of muslin, it must have been real Indian, it was so soft and beautiful, looking like clouds."

"Yes, and then the lace on it must have cost oceans of money; and her brooch, did you ever see such a ruby? It looked on her like a charmed amulet."

"Raving mad, are they not, father?" said midships.

"Yes," said the old Admiral, "like all women, they noticed nothing but the dress. I must say, I think her one of the prettiest young women I have seen for a long time. I would advise your next cruize to be on the Welsh coast, Bob."

"Much obliged, sir; if you will only remember poor Jack, and come down with the ready, I'll be off to-morrow."

"Is she not a beautiful contrast to that proud, imperious Lady Jane?" said one sister.

"Yes, she looks as mild and gentle as the other is cross and overbearing," said the other.

"I trust," said the Admiral, "that her arrival will benefit the Gomer people in every way. They are in sad want of some gentle, firm hand, and some overlooking; they are getting sad scamps, some of them. I think I saw a look, now and then, of sense and determi-

nation about her, and the Duke, I noticed, was quite taken with her, which argues favourably."

"So he was," cried the girls; "and he is never in the habit of speaking to any woman but his mother."

"Don't you know," said midships, "that he was in love when he was nineteen or twenty —that the young lady died, in consequence of an accident?"

"No, I never heard that; I only know, that though he is the handsomest man I ever saw, and quite courtly in his manners, he is always talking about turnips, and crops, and corn, and carrots, and mangold-wurtzel, and all those sorts of interesting things."

"Well, don't chatter any more, girls—I want my nap; but you may depend upon it, the Duke would not have shaken hands with her, in the middle of dinner, if he had not been greatly taken with her. I wonder if she will oust my Lady Jane. Hope so."

Whereupon the worthy Admiral composed

himself to sleep, and the young ladies whispered to each other, how white muslin, very fine and clear, but beautifully made, would look at the next York ball.

The Dean and his lady were equally delighted with their new neighbour.

"I shall be glad, for the sake of the neighbourhood, if she turns out as good as she is pretty," said he.

"I think there is every prospect of it," replied his wife; "her eyes have something heavenly in them."

## CHAPTER XVII.

The Lady Jane had retired to her boudoir after breakfast. She was not in the habit of being called down to pay the last duties to her guests; it was the general habit of those who frequented the house, to leave some message with the groom of the chambers. She was therefore quite unaware of the scene going on below, and was indulging herself with writing a letter to Lady Julia.

After ample details of her fête, the preparations she had made, and the august company that honoured it, she concluded with an account

of her daughter-in-law. "Lord Gomer's wife seems a quiet lady-like person, which is fortunate, for it covers a multitude of defects of education. She is also pretty; but extremely young, and more juvenile even in manner than looks. I trust she may not prove a pretty simpleton; I intend to study her character, but I much fear, my dear Julia, it will be but taking upon myself the charge of another child; which, after all the exertions for my other children, my devoted care for them, and unwearied study for their welfare, I find a little hard. My dear Mr. Malcolm and I have often speculated upon a little time to ourselves, when we might make the continent the scene of many pleasant and profitable hours; I need not tell you, who know my taste for the beautiful, and the refinement of my mind, what real enjoyment I should derive from a visit to all that is grand and beautiful, in the different courts of Europe; especially with so intelligent and *distingué* a person as Mr. Malcolm. But,

as usual, I give way, and suffer my private feelings to melt before the duties of my public life; as I said to Mr. Malcolm last night, 'No, I shall not leave him, I have ever been a fond, doting mother to Frank; and now he has burdened himself with a simple young wife, I shall not leave them. I shall devote myself to both. They are but children, and I will take upon myself the care of them.'"

Lady Jane felt a little twinge as she wrote this; for the modest self-possession of her daughter-in-law, before breakfast, when she and Frank had shewn such lamentable want of good breeding, in not introducing her to her company, rather contradicted what she was writing to her sister.

Also, Lady Jane was not pleased at being called "Mamma," without leave or licence. Her own children hardly had the presumption to do so; and that Lady Gomer should have done so immediately, not only irritated her, but it had a sort of appearance of determination of cha-

racter. She had graciously intended giving her permission, after the favour had been duly and humbly requested; and now it was taken as a right, she determined, the first favourable opportunity, to place the matter in its proper light before the delinquent, and have the permission demanded in form.

In the meantime, Nest, with her husband and two sisters, had been making a tour through her house.

Augusta did not particularly care for her new sister, for whose sense she had no great value; Nest had promised her, on the first asking, the patterns of all her bridal gear.

Augusta's principal amusement and employment was spent over her dress; and to have what no other, or, at all events, few others, had, was the ultimate object of her ambition.

She was a very handsome girl, not so courtly and high-bred as her mother in her manners; in fact, when out of her sight, she bordered on

the inelegant; she had at present, a discontented, peevish look: her mother would not listen to a word concerning her marriage.

Sir John West, her intended husband, was like her in character, and deep-thinking bystanders might, though they allowed they were fitted for each other, yet see many miseries in store for them. Traits of resemblance, in selfishness, vanity, and want of principle, seemed the only marriage garments they had prepared; and what wedded life could thrive on such plenishing?

Mimi was a little provoked with Nest, because she was not enthusiastic in her praises of the Castle.

"It is most beautiful, most gorgeous," said Nest, hanging on her husband's arm, and looking up into his face with loving and mirthful eyes; "but Frank and I have seen such grand scenes together—have we not, Frank, in the Dom Daniel caverns?"

"Yes, my Nessie, I shall never think any

sight so beautiful as those caverns, and you know why," said her husband.

"And do you know, Mimi," said Nest, apologetically, "I do not much care for grand houses. I like that place most, where Frank is."

"But supposing Frank lived in a barn?" said Mimi, scornfully.

"Then I would live there too, and we would be so happy in the barn; building a palace, the same as St. John built for the King of Patmos."

"What sort of a palace was that?" said Mimi, eagerly.

"Oh! Frank knows; so I will tell you by and by," said Nest.

"No, no, I like a story—I will hear it; may I not, Frank?"

"She is wilful, Nessie, so tell her; I should like to hear about this wonderful palace, myself."

"You know, of course," said Nest, "that

St. John, the beloved disciple, was a carpenter, and very learned in his trade. After our Saviour's death, he was employed to build a magnificent palace in the Island of Patmos, for some great king, whose name I have forgotten. This king furnished him with a very large sum of money, so that nothing might be wanting to make this palace a perfect gem of art.

"When St. John arrived at Patmos, he found the people there very ignorant, foolish, and poor; many afflicted with sore sickness, and all heathens. He immediately set himself to work to mend their condition. He preached the Holy Gospel to them in the first place; and he spent the king's money in building schools for them, proper dwelling houses, and hospitals for the sick. So they became blessed in every way.

"When the time came for the king to arrive, and take possession of his summer palace, there were no sick on the island, no weary, faint-hearted, or unhappy person; no heathen,

no poor, or miserable one; but also, there was no palace. So the king was very wroth, for all the money was spent, and he put St. John in prison; intending to have him tried, and, if found guilty, condemned to death.

"That day, his eldest son was taken ill, and died after a few hours' sickness. In the night he appeared in a dream to his father, saying, 'Father, release the good St. John; for on my arrival at the abode of the blessed, I found a magnificent palace prepared for you and me, such as mortal eye hath not seen, neither mortal heart can conceive the beauty thereof. And every stone has been cemented together by the prayers of the people of Patmos, and every pillar and arch raised by their grateful thanks to you. For St. John, through your means, raised them from the depths of misery to the happiness of the Redeemed.'

"Now Frank and I mean to build that sort of palace," said Nest, looking with large serious eyes into his face.

"My Nessie, that is a serious story," said Frank.

"But a very pretty one," said Mimi.

"I cannot understand it," said Augusta; "it seems like a child's fable."

"It is an old legend, that I picked up in a curious old book, Frank," murmured Nest, blushing. "But now let us see some more of this great house. I like the view from the windows, and the shape and form of those noble beech trees. Ah, what a lovely world this is. How can any one be unhappy in it?"

"I am," said Mimi, "very often."

"Then you shall not be any more, if I can help you," said West, affectionately.

"Thank you, sister; if I thought there was any one in the world that loved or cared for me, I would try to be different."

"I do, you foolish Mimi," said Frank.

"Yes, I should have been a wretch long ago, but for you, Frank; only I want some one to help me to do right."

"Then," said Nest, "I will begin immediately, if you will suffer me. First of all, Frank, we will examine her pockets, and confiscate all the sugar-plums. Then you must come to my room, and we will brush all this pretty golden hair, so like Frank's, and we will have a frock that has all its fastenings on. Then, Frank, will she not look pretty?"

"I don't think she can ever look very pretty, with such a dingy complexion," said Frank, laughing. "However, cary her off, and let me judge when she is metamorphosed."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

THE Duke and Duchess did not remain long at Gomer Castle, and the next few days were passed by Lady Jane in sounding, what she considered, the depths of Nest's understanding.

"My dear," she would say, as if to a little child, "have you learnt to play on the piano? —let me hear you."

It had been too great an exertion for such grand people as the Ladies Elmore to slave themselves over a perfect knowledge of music. Therefore, their talents in that way, consisted in stumbling over a few of the oldest tunes on

record; and their gifts of ear and time were very small. It was not, therefore, to be wondered at, that Lady Jane could be no judge of Nest's talents in that way; which, without being anything extraordinary, were most pleasing. Her taste and touch were beautiful, her execution more finished than brilliant, her voice was low, plaintive, and sweet.

"I am glad, my dear, to perceive you are not wholly without accomplishments," said Lady Jane, condescendingly; "really you play very well, and I shall be pleased to hear you in an evening, when we are alone."

Nest listened in perfect silence, with downcast eyes, but the shadow of the little dimples showed she was rather amused than otherwise.

"Can you speak any language besides Welsh, my dear?" continued Lady Jane.

"I do not speak Welsh, mamma."

"Oh dear me, how odd! I thought nothing but Welsh was spoken in your country; and that it was a horrid, barbarous country."

Nest smiled in silence, but Lady Jane did not adventure any more remarks upon language; for as she was ignorant of all, but a very little bad French, she feared to trust herself.

At this moment, they heard the ring of the great hall bell, announcing visitors; and Lady Jane moving her seat, Mimi had just time to whisper to Nest, "Now we shall have such fun—it is. our grandmother; I saw the grey and silver liveries, and she and mamma fight like cats."

It rushed through Nest's mind in a moment, that she had heard Frank say he had a grandmother, as well as herself, whom she must love; when the door opened, and the Dowager Lady Gomer was announced.

"How dare you suffer that person to enter this house?" said Lady Jane, in a violent loud voice, her face inflamed with passion.

Her exclamation must have been caught in the teeth by the new comer, but apparently

quite unmoved by it, the prettiest little quaint-looking old lady appeared, leaning on a valuable ebony stick, which was elaborately carved and ornamented with gold and precious stones. Her dress of pearl grey satin stood out with rich stiffness, and a valuable India shawl, soft as a cobweb, covered her shoulders. Her little old-fashioned-shaped bonnet was made of the most costly lace, and was ornamented with pale evening primroses. A rich ruche of blond encircled quite a picture of an old face; it was so fair and so pretty, in spite of the innumerable wrinkles, and the snow-white hair. Her gloves were of faultless white kid, making her hands appear scarcely larger than those of a child six years old—indeed, her stature was considerably under five feet.

"So, my dear," said the little old lady, her blue eyes sparkling quite youthfully, "you are the new Lady Gomer; I have come to pay my respects to you. Do you know who I am?"

Before Nest could have replied to the ques-

tion asked, the Lady Jane again, in a loud, agitated voice, repeated what she had said to the old lady herself.

"How dare you enter my presence, madam?"

"Don't mind her, my dear," said the little old Lady Gomer, quite cheerfully. "I am used to her; she killed my son, you know, so we don't speak; that is, I never speak to her; I made a vow I would not, when he died. But I wish her no evil; I vowed I never would speak to her, and so I never do; but I am a Christian, my dear—I wish her well; I was in hopes age, that tames us all, would have softened her. But take no notice, my dear; pray don't mind, she will be better when it is over. Let her say just what she likes, I never resent it."

But Lady Jane's storm was beyond all bounds. Pale and terrified, Nest clasped the hands of the little old lady, and stood between her and the enraged woman. As violent in

her actions as words, it seemed to the shrinking girl that the little old lady would be crushed with the rough touch of such anger; she whispered, "Oh, madam! let us go; come to my rooms! Oh, mamma! forbear, I entreat you!"

"No, my dear," said the Dowager, quite imperturbable, "I don't stir; if she does not like my company, she can leave the room."

Lady Jane tore the bell-rope down, while the quiet little old lady calmly took a pinch of snuff, carefully removing all traces of such an act with a very fine cambric handkerchief.

With hot and hasty words Lady Jane continued to rave. The groom of the chambers appeared.

"Order that lady's carriage! Madam, I desire you'll leave my house," said she, imperiously.

"Tell my servants," said the little Dow-

ager, quietly, "to put up my horses; I intend to remain here some time.

"I like your looks, my dear," turning to Nest; "you and I must become acquainted. Did no one ever tell you that you had a grandmother, my child? There, now, that poor woman's gone, so sit down, and don't look so frightened; you have not seen her in a passion before. Well, Mimi, why don't you look at your old grandam?—you have not become proud, have you?"

"No, no, my darling old granny, only I was laughing so at mamma, obliged to go off at last herself."

"Hush! hush, naughty girl, be a Christian, my dear. Poor woman! she is sadly to be pitied. Very sad, child, when the one spirit is gone, and the seven bad spirits come in their place. I bear her no malice, but I never speak to her. I made a vow when she killed my son.

"And so Frank never told you of me?"

she continued, her little bright face looking quite angry.

"Madam," said Nest, "do you live at Myrtle Grove?"

"Yes, child."

"Then Frank told me he was going to drive me there to-morrow, to see some one I was to love very much."

"Ah!" said the Dowager, looking brighter and prettier than ever, "good Frank, good boy, I thought he would not forget the little old woman. Well, my dear, do you think you shall love me?"

"Yes, madam, very much," said Nest, smiling, and beginning to recover, and kissing the little tiny hand.

"Nice child! very pretty! stoop down, my dear. There," kissing her, "I only do that to those I like."

"Oh! grandmamma, you will so love Nest, she is so good," said Mimi.

"Has she been looking after you? Miss

Untidiness—yes, I think she has—you look very nice, Mimi, come stoop down too. I don't mind kissing you to-day, you look more tidy than usual. I have only these two grandchildren to love, my dear, and I have a very large heart; I don't love Augusta, never did; but some people I love directly. I like you, my dear, very much; but it is not because you are so pretty; and to be sure, God's work is very fair; lovely creature you are, indeed, my child: however, as I said, it's not your beauty, it's—come, let me look into your eyes. Now I see a long way into your heart: I read there a noble, fine heart; I see no pride, thank God. I read determination, firmness, gentle discretion, modest self-reliance, and, my dear love, such a world of love, in the depths of those lovely eyes. Ah! my second Frank, thou art lucky: God be praised, my child—my pretty one, you have a glass-like heart, a large, clear, glass-like heart; my Frank, my last and only Frank, will be

happy; and I—I feel a most happy little old woman."

The tears fell in showers from her eyes, showing the depth of affection she had got, in her fresh old age, for the children of that son she had adored. Nest, awed and struck, knelt by her side, and wiped the tears from her eyes, while she caressed and soothed her with loving words.

After a few hysterical sobs, the little bright face began smiling, though bedewed with tears, like an April day.

"I am such a silly little old woman, my dear; one of the silliest little things that ever existed. But I am so anxious about them, I could not rest, my dear, until I had seen Frank's wife, my only Frank left. Ah! my child, I had reason to be anxious, but I bear no malice; I am a Christian, and only wish I was a better one. But I do my best; I determined to come and judge with my own eyes. And if I

liked you, my dear, I knew I should be the happiest little old woman in the world; and if I did not, then I would have recollected I was a Christian.

"I am a prosy old woman, my dear, very; and very tiresome sometimes, too. But I see you are laughing at me, and those pearly teeth put me in mind of something. Run, Mimi, and ask for some parcels in my carriage. And now, my pretty one, you are so young, and for aught I know, may be ignorant, though you don't look it; I must have some private talk with you.

"We must guard Frank's happiness, Frank the Second. His mother must not be the death of both; I bear no malice, my dear, I desire to be a Christian. But by ourselves we will have a little talk.

"I won't be ill-natured, but I must just warn you of some things. I must just put you on your guard. Look at that poor child, just run

on my errand. If I did not clothe her, she would not be fit to be seen. Yes, with all her pride, she would let her children go like beggars.

"Dear me, dear me, I must not be ill-natured, but it's due to you, my child, to be put on your guard. Now, here is that child Mimi; so no more, no more at present. We will have a private talk. Good child. Quick child. There, see I have not forgotten you. Here is a new silk dress, and the stockings you wrote to me for; and all those other things, and here are your bon-bons——"

"Nest does not like my bon-bons," said Mimi, slyly.

"Dear me, poor thing, I believe you are right, my pretty one, but she has had so few pleasures. And all her little old grandmother can do, is by stealth."

"The dearest, most darling, little old granny," said Mimi, warmly. "I should have drowned

myself long ago, but for you and Frank, though you don't love me much, granny."

"No, child, not much, you are so untidy. But I love you a little to-day—you look clean and neat."

"I am afraid you will love Nest more than me," said Mimi, mournfully.

"Yes, child, yes, she is like a fresh pearl, just out of the ocean; and she shall have what she is like. Here, my pearl, these are your old granny's wedding present for you; never been on any neck but hers, never been near—ha! you know, but I bear no malice."

So rambling on, as quick as lightning in speech, the bright little old lady took out of an ivory India case, lined with ruby velvet, a necklace of single pearls, so large in size, and so faultless in their orient bloom, that both the girls uttered an exclamation of delight.

"Put them on, put them on, let me see how they look; quite suited to that pretty

stately throat; they are yours, my dear, your old granny's present; nobody ever wore them before (excepting herself)—they are free from all pride. Pride often longed for them, though it never could get them; tried hard, tried by law. It would not do, they were my own. Every pearl alone of itself worth forty pounds, my dear; they suit you; really, my dear, I don't know which is the prettiest, you or them."

Frank at this moment appeared, and the loving delight of the little old lady made the tears spring into Nest's eyes more than once. He agreed thoroughly with his grandmother, in thinking Nest well became her pearls; they were both profuse in their thanks to the happy old lady, who, though her gift was almost priceless in value, yet saw how they liked her good manner in giving it.

So those four spent a most happy day, and in the prospect of another on the morrow, to

be spent at Myrtle Grove. The little picture of an old grandmother departed, her heart full of happiness. Lady Jane did not appear all day.

## CHAPTER XIX.

On the morrow they left for their destination, before the Lady Jane appeared; all three in the highest spirits and happiness. Frank driving them in a phaeton, made after a fashion of his own; for the seat in which the two girls sat was so close to the single one from whence he drove, that they seemed all three sitting together. Two spirited black ponies, with coats like satin, bore them along, with untiring speed, and two grooms, on black horses, accompanied them.

Frank shewed Nest all that was worth seeing

on the road; she every now and then stood up to admire, sometimes the view, sometimes the ponies, and almost always the driver; who would put one arm round her, to keep her steady, and yet hold the little frisky steeds in good control. Mimi would take advantage of these little moments to pop a sugar-plum in her mouth, and was only discovered once; when Nest, in a peremptory manner, ordered her to throw it away, which she mournfully did. No other event occurred to mar their happiness, and brimful of it, they arrived at the lodge of Myrtle Grove.

Here a group of seemingly as happy people threw open the beautiful gates, fairy-like in their delicate tracery. These all smiled, curtseyed, and bowed, past all belief; their joy and delight being apparently quite irrepressible.

Bowling along a broad road, that looked trim and neat enough to be taken for the stately terrace walk at Gomer Castle, they came to a small wood of beautiful old beeches, then

a velvety piece of lawn, on which ruled, with a sweeping stateliness that bore its branches faltering many yards down over the grass, a magnificent larch.

Then the carriage swept by this grand fellow, and disclosed a garden so radiant with flowers, it was quite dazzling to look at.

Leading from the garden was a trellis-work made of larch poles, from which hung festoons and bunches of roses, glowing with beauty. Forming an angle to the trellis-work, was a rustic sort of conservatory; and adjoining that, with a back-ground of dark cedars and graceful horse-chesnuts, was embosomed a house. Was it a house?

Could it be a common, every-day, useable, living house? or was it some fairy palace, built up with moss and roses, supported with stately lilies, ornamented with geraniums and pansies, perfumed with verbenas and jessamine?

Nest uttered exclamation after exclamation

of delight. At the large open glass door stood the little fairy old lady, in a silver grey dress, little white roses in her cap: her blue eyes dancing with pleasure, and her carved ebony stick tapping on the door-step, as if equally impatient to welcome the guests.

Behind her, round her, on all sides were many domestics, of every grade; all the women habited in grey dresses and white caps; all the men that were in livery, in grey and silver; and all apparently in as great a state of happiness as their little lady.

"Ah!" thought Nest to herself, as she sprang out of the carriage, almost before it stopped, "this is a welcome for a new daughter, this is home!" and she knelt on one knee, to receive her grandmother's kiss and blessing.

"Welcome! welcome!" said the old lady; then kissing Frank and Mimi. "Welcome! welcome!" echoed all the servants.

"Excuse them, my dear, you know I have

a large heart, and I like to love all those around me, and they are all so good and attentive to their little old mistress, that she is obliged to be very good to them in return."

"Blessings! blessings on her! may God bless the best of ladies!" was uttered on all sides.

"Go away, go away, do, with your noise; you will frighten my granddaughter. Come, my dear, come away with me."

"May God bless the young lady, and make her a comfort to you, my lady," said a nice-looking, quiet old woman, as the head of the female servants; and the sentiment was again echoed on all sides.

"I hope so," said Nest, taking the old woman's hand, who flushed with delight; "you must tell me how I can best do it; and pray that God will give me grace to be a daughter to her."

The old woman burst into a flood of tears, as much with pleasure as from emotion. She

had been Lady Gomer's servant ever since her mistress had been eighteen years old.

Frank, in the meantime, was distributing what he called marriage gifts among the under servants; he followed them into the drawing-room. It was long and low; one end consisted of an octagonal bay window, filled with flowers.

The furniture was almost wholly composed of carved ebony, relieved with cushions and coverings of green velvet. Carved ivory ornaments of figures, idols, birds, beasts, lizards, and other odd things, supported the tables, screens, and cheffoniers; while china, from the delicate transparent porcelain up to green dragon jars, seven feet high, profusely ornamented the room.

Nevertheless, all the useable furniture, such as chairs, tables, sofas, and ottomans, was of the smallest size, more befitting a child's boudoir, than for grown-up people; especially when upwards of six feet high.

Frank carefully wended his way through all

the delicate little articles, and took possession of one chair of stouter proportions than the rest, upon which he seemed quite at home.

Struck with the extreme beauty of the room, as well as its singularity, Nest stood entranced. Her artist's eyes took in the blending of the green and white, the lighting up of the dark ebony with the exquisite china, the myrtle green carpet, which here and there bore a bright-coloured rose on its velvet surface, toning down the gorgeousness of the flowers. A paper of pearly hue, with delicate green and gold leaves over it, seemed equally appropriate. The little bright grandmother was quite delighted.

"Pretty room, my dear, is it not? rather low, people say, but I don't care; I don't like to be lost in a room—I like to see everything without breaking my neck: clean and fresh, I want nothing but that; and oh! my poor maids, what a life they lead; sad thing, my dear, if I find a speck of dust. Now, come with me; what will you do? will you take off

your wraps, or will you take a walk with me, and see the only children I have now? Ah, me! ah, me! well, I bear no malice, forget and forgive; and I must say nothing before these two children; I am a Christian, I wish I was a better one."

They agreed to go out. From the lovely drawing-room they passed into a smaller, equally low, but different in appearance, though green was the predominant colour. The floor was covered with fine India matting; the walls were hung with a sort of trellis-work paper, green and white; the furniture was composed of curiously woven cane, and the chintz that formed the covers and cushions was green and white. A few magnificent old jars, filled with pot-pourri, and some carved boxes of sandal-wood, were the only ornaments. The coolness, freshness, brightness, and simplicity of this room, were quite delicious.

From thence they passed into the conservatory, which was radiant with sweet flowers,

hanging in clusters and festoons of every hue and shape. The melodious notes of birds were heard, breaking now and then into an irresistible burst of song, as they sported and fluttered in a marble fountain.

Lavishly breaking off branches of rare flowers, as if brionies and wild roses were exotics to them, the delighted little lady loaded them with bright and luscious blossoms, enjoying their happiness to her heart's content.

Then they passed, though very loth, from the conservatory into the trellised rose-walk. Here they were met by a neat little grey maiden, who bore in one hand a soft, fine white Shetland shawl; and on the other, a little lace hood, lined and quilted inside with grey satin.

"There, you see, there they are, taking such care of me, they won't let me stir without running after me. Well! I suppose I must put them on, or Milman will be angry; otherwise I feel quite warm, and so happy; I am quite in a glow. It is you, my dear, it is you who

have made me happy ; I have not felt so happy since, since, my poor dear first Frank was killed ; but I won't bear malice, no, I won't, on a day like this, when I see such a brilliant ray of sunshine in store for me, poor little miserable, happy old woman.

"Ah ! here is Cox, with a little refreshment ; worthy Cox, to make up for the old lady's remissness. Pour us out some wine, Cox ; my dears, welcome, most welcome ; all your good healths, my loves. Really, three of you to love, happy old woman that I am."

They all partook of some cake and wine, brought by the old butler and the old footman in grey and silver ; it was pretty to see the evident affection with which they pressed a little more refreshment on their beloved little lady.

"My lady, just take half a glass more, you will be overdoing yourself, I know," said Cox and half aside to Lord Gomer, "She has been on the full trot all day, my Lord, quite excited."

"Now, I have shewn my garden, I wish to take a little turn with you, my dear, I cannot call you by your name, for I don't understand it; I never heard such a name before; you shall be my pearl, I will call you my pearl, my dear. And you, Frank, go to the stables, and tell me how my horses look, and take Mimi with you; really, child, how tidy you are, you look quite pretty, stoop down and kiss me, my dear."

When alone with her pearl, the good old lady repeated all she thought she had omitted to tell Nest the day before. And while she let her into many secrets, making the poor girl's heart ache, for what the little gentle old lady had undergone, and almost quake with fear, as to what she might have to undergo herself; it was all said, without a particle of rancour or ill-will.

"Now, my dear, my pearl, I would not tell you this for the world; I have no malice, but it is right you should know something; my second Frank's happiness must not be lost,

through false delicacy. Ah! now, if my first Frank had seen you—my dear, I know but little of you, I have seen you but twice; but my child, my pearl, we should have led the life of angels."

Their conversation was interrupted after a while, by Cox bringing his lady a garden-seat, saying, " she had walked enough."

Then Frank and Mimi joining them, they all went into the house; and Mimi was ordered to show Nest all over it, while the good little grandmother addressed some private talk to Frank; in which, without saying a word that a son should not hear of his mother, she gave him to understand, he had got a treasure in his wife, and must take care no one stepped between them.

" She is very young, Frank, and very girlish-looking, but she is not a girl; she is a deep-thinking, loving, tender-hearted woman. Your poor little grandmother has a large heart, but nothing more, no wit, no sense, nothing to be

proud of. But it's different with this pearl you have picked up. In her noble, frank eye, in her fine beaming countenance, in her beautiful dignified air, in everything, there breathes a soul that will do its duty, and win heaven, through every weal or woe. Cherish her, Frank, love her, guard her, never sully her name with a thought of wrong; hide nothing from her, be frank and noble as herself. I say nothing about her being 'put upon,' as the saying is. She has an inward respect for the free and guileness nature she has received from God, that will suffer no one to lower her from the pedestal on which she has placed herself: whoever seeks to lower her, will themselves fall."

This was the severest touch upon the Lady Jane, that the good grandmother allowed herself. They were now served with an entertainment suitable to the house and its mistress. No heavy joints, and John Bull dishes, were put on the table; delicate little chickens,

minute cutlets, tasty little dishes of all kinds, covered the board, and were removed to give place to fruit of the most superb and beautiful kinds. After dinner, the little old lady took an easy chair, and a grey maiden bringing in a large lace shawl, it was thrown all over her; and bidding them good bye, for an hour, in which they were desired to amuse themselves as they liked, she sank into a gentle nap.

They took a brisk walk into the village, and all about the place, where the love and veneration with which their grandmother was mentioned, the clean and respectable appearance of the people, the beautiful neatness of their houses, all sank deep into Nest's heart, like good seed, waiting for fruition.

At the end of the hour, they returned, had coffee served in little chased silver cups. Nest was given a valuable India dress of white muslin, run with threads of silver. Mimi, a long-coveted carved ivory box, filled with sugar-plums. Frank, a large yellow diamond of great

value; and laden with the blessings and good wishes of the darling old granny, they departed. The array of servants assembled again, as if being of the household, they also had part and parcel in all their mistress's loves and affections. And thus blessing and blessed, they had a luxurious drive in the cool moonlight; and arrived all too soon, as they thought, at the grand baronial entrance of Gomer Castle.

## CHAPTER XX.

Nest sat alone in her chamber that night; she had written her usual daily journal to her beloved grandmother, and was reclining in the huge carved oak arm-chair, whose dark velvet covering showed in strong relief her girlish figure, wrapped in a white dressing-gown. Her shining dark hair was all combed smoothly back, and gathered into a white net, showing her faultless profile, and beautiful statue-like throat, against the velvet cushion, giving them the appearance of polished ivory. One little

foot was resting on a stool, half thrust into a black velvet slipper; the pink and dimpled naked half, looking like a little child's. A large golden-clasped Bible lay on her knee.

This was Nest's private hour, for meditating on all she saw and heard through the day. She was thinking of her new mother and grandmother, the one all love, the other, all—not hate, exactly, that was too hard a word, but something very much like it.

"Poor mamma!" soliloquised the young girl, "how much she loses. What defect is it, in her, or her education, that has made her what she is? Is there one person in the world that loves her? None of her children do—they are afraid of her. Even Frank, my own Frank, yesterday, when he talked of entering upon his duties as a magistrate, and becoming the public man his rank and station demanded; when my heart thanked God for the resolution, and my eyes looked the happiness they felt on hearing

him; did she not laugh, laugh in a scornful, bitter way, and call him a boy? And then his countenance changed, he grew red, and looked vexed, and said no more on the matter. He is not afraid so much of her, as of that bitter, mocking laugh. She changes his good and right feelings into those more akin to her own, when she thus laughs at him. Perhaps that was how she irritated his father. Everybody says, how like my Frank is to his father. It must be my business to shield him against that unmotherlike mocking. Ah! mamma, mamma, would that you could see, see what it is to love, and be loved; is it possible you can live day after day, knowing that no heart responds to your own, no ear rejoices to hear your voice, no eye brightens as you approach? If she could but be made to feel the difference but once.

"And yet, can I presume to hope, after husband, children, all, have failed, that I can

awaken the stifled and dormant feeling; for I am sure it must be there. No, I do not so presume, but through her children, I might perhaps. I might persuade Frank to be a little less cold, and more like a son to her; and perhaps she may be pleased at seeing the improvement in Mimi. I will rise early to-morrow, and go and see that Mimi is nicely dressed, and we will together bring her a bouquet, and present it, in a loving, child-like way. If she only feels pleased at first, that will be something gained. For to-morrow, after that frightful scene, she may, perhaps, hardly like to see us, and if we meet her gladly, happily, and frankly, it will take away from any uncomfortable feeling. And the good little grandmother, with nothing but her large heart, innocent as a child, how she makes herself beloved by all. What a difference between the two! Simple little loving grandmother, driving from her, with the determination of a great soul, all

malice and ill-will, keeping her child-like heart pure and meek amid such bitter wrong. What a lesson to be learnt from the little child grandmother. The stately, noble-looking mamma, harbouring every wrong and evil passion; looking mean and insignificant in her violent rage, by the little meek delicate spirit, so harmless in thought, so helpless in reality."

"How deeply you are lost in thought, my Nessie," said Frank, entering unnoticed by her; "of what were you thinking, pretty one?"

Nest sprang up, and putting him into the vast old chair, knelt on the cushion by his side, her favourite attitude,—"Of the new mamma and grandmamma," she said.

"Did you ever see such a difference in any two people?" said Frank, his brow contracting. "I always feel so joyous and free from all care when in my grandmother's presence; though she is nothing but a weak little child-spoiling, loving, old granny; I feel nothing but hard,

bitter, and evil things in my mother's company."

"Oh, Frank!"

"It is true, Nessie; she is my evil genius; whatever good was in me, whatever right intentions I had, she would scoff them away; just as I have always heard, she bitterly scoffed at anything my father might do. Think how happy we have been to-day, though it is not at all in my line to spend all the day with old women and young girls; and yet, as we came nearer this hateful place, for it is hateful to me, (nay, don't put your hand on my mouth, I know it is home,) I feel every evil passion rising in me."

"She will not live with us long, dear Frank."

"I asked Elmore to tell her to move in six months, but I believe, Nessie, she will see us out, before she goes herself. I can almost perceive what she intends to do. She means to make out, that I have married such a silly young

wife, she is obliged to remain here, to take care of us."

"Then leave me to settle that; I will make it my business to prove to her, that Frank's wife is a Solomon in petticoats."

"I think Frank's wife is the loveliest thing on earth; and if it was not for her, I should be a miserable animal, without a single thing to care for, or do."

"Ah, Frank! you must not be ungrateful! Let me read you this Psalm, the hundred and third Psalm; and then you shall tell me if you should say such naughty things."

She read in a low voice, every now and then raising the large serious eyes, full of deep feeling, to his face, at appropriate places.

As she concluded, Frank's eyes filled with tears, he clasped his arms round her, and hid his face in her shoulder; after a pause, he said—

"My darling, that is very beautiful; no one

ever talked to me of religion before; I have never been taught a single duty, except a little now and then, that I have picked up from our childish grandmother; you shall be my monitress, and every night shall read to me. I am an ungrateful dog, I know, I have got what no one else in the world has, a precious pearl; I know I have many duties to perform here, but I hate to go among the people, or to see any of them, for I cannot tell who is right or who is wrong; and there is bitter wrong somewhere. With such misery and distress as that, I shrink from the investigation that ought to be a paramount duty with me. I have been thinking of the story you told Mimi, of the palace of St. John, and your remark, that we would try to build one for ourselves. Nessie, I feel the wish to do that; I feel, that if helped and encouraged, I would try to do my duty. But that odious, scornful, bitter, mocking laugh of that woman, who calls herself my mother"—

"Oh! my darling husband, my own Frank!" said Nest, pathetically, then blushing deeply; for the shy, young, four-weeks' old wife, had never yet been able to give voice to the love she bore in her heart of hearts. And Frank heard these terms of endearment for the first time.

Had Lady Jane been a fly on the wall, and seen Frank's delighted face; how he tried to catch a glimpse of the crimson cheek, hidden in his bosom; how he said, "Say that again, my wife, and I will go to York to-morrow, and try to do my duty, and I won't care for any scoff or scorn." And how Nest said it in a fairy-like whisper, and how he declared, though he looked delighted, and kissed her little hand over and over again, that he did not hear her, and that she must say it louder, (wicked, exacting, young fibbing husband), and how she had to say it, and a great deal more, over and over again—if, as I said, Lady Jane had been a fly on the wall,

and beheld this scene, she would have thrown up her beautiful aristocratic nose, and said, "Foolish children, bring them their pinafores, and bread and milk."

## CHAPTER XXI.

On the morrow, Nest fulfilled her over-night intentions, superintended Mimi's toilette, having desired her maid, a day or two before, to make her sister a white morning dress, similar to her own; and both being highly satisfied with the effect of their labours, descended together, to prepare the premeditated bouquet. Nothing could be prettier than the advance of the two girls, dressed alike, but so different; the tall sylph-like figure of Nest, with her small classic head and dark hair, contrasted well with Mimi's

golden curls, bright blue eyes, and more chubby form.

But Lady Jane, though she boasted of her fine and correct taste, had no sort of idea of the picturesque; and being in a very bad humour, received the bouquet with a careless "Good morning, young ladies."

Mimi had a little idea she was looking very pretty, for her; and a hope that her mother would notice it, gave a blush to her cheek, and a sort of consciousness to her manner. But the only notice her mother took of her, was to say, in a sharp, angry voice,

"I desire, child, that you go directly after breakfast, to Miss Croft; an unheard-of thing, indeed, for you to absent yourself, for three days from the school-room, without leave."

So the two girls felt themselves rebuked. Mimi put a sugar-plum into her mouth; Nest knew, by the sharp glance bestowed upon her, that she was included in the reprimand, and that it would only make matters worse with Mimi,

did she interfere. But drawing herself up, with a pretty air of dignity, she crossed over to where the governess was sitting, and in a clear voice said,

"I hope you have enjoyed your three days' holiday, Miss Croft; I assure you I have, and I thank you for lending me my sister for that time."

Miss Croft, looking more heavy, dull, and leaden-eyed than ever, rose and curtsied; as if involuntarily compelled to do so, by the courtesy with which Nest addressed her.

If the young Lady Gomer had imagined that Lady Jane was in the least concerned for the exhibition of temper she had betrayed, when last she saw her, she was quite mistaken.

It might have crossed Lady Jane's mind, that in her passion she used expressions unbecoming a lady, and quite unbefitting a Duke's daughter; yet, that she was not justified in getting into a passion—that it was wrong, wicked, and odious, never entered her head. Not being naturally

sweet-tempered, her mental condition had not been improved by the old Lady Gomer's visit; and further discomposed, by the party going to spend the day with her.

In addition, in spite of the high character given of Mr. Malcolm, by Lady Jane to her sister, a *tête-à-tête* with him was by no means agreeable to her; for he generally took the opportunity of no one being in the house, to imbibe much more wine than was good for his health or wits; and the bounds of restraint removed, his natural character appeared, which was that of a vulgar, forward man.

Though a woman of violent passions and unrestrained speech, Lady Jane was not vulgar, and could not understand vulgarity. The refinements of her rank and station jarred greatly against the low and common routine of Mr. Malcolm's life and manners, though she invested him with qualities totally different. And the mere fact of her not understanding such a character, not being able to comprehend that a

handsome exterior may cover a very mean interior, irritated and galled her the more. The frank, open, manly Lord Gomer, her first husband, in spite of his passionate temperament, lived in her memory, when she did think of him, with feelings akin to regret. Especially when, with staggering step, inflamed visage, and thick voice, her peerless Mr. Malcolm would address her as follows :—

"My charming fair, you look divine to-night ;" and smelling of some unknown liquid, would attempt to salute her. Withering was her look, and bitter her speech, as she repelled him. Nevertheless, such feelings only served to harden her heart the more.

The happy, unconcerned air of Nest, the shameful humility with which Miss Croft had received her courtesy, the hearing that Frank was going to York, completed her ill humour.

And when Frank had left the room, she ordered Mimi and Miss Croft off, with a voice that made the former jump, and the latter burn her mouth with hot tea, hastily swallowed; and then told Nest she had no doubt Miss Croft would allow her to participate in the advantages Amelia was acquiring under her care.

With a thankful respiration that Frank was out of hearing, Nest replied, quietly —

"No, I thank you, mamma; but I shall be always glad to join you, Mimi, in your walks, if Miss Croft will permit me."

Miss Croft mumbled out an assent, and disappeared with her pupil.

Nest saw Mimi depart sorrowfully, and she received Frank's parting wave of the hand, as she looked out of the window, almost with tears.

He would not be at home till quite evening. She heard Lady Jane's voice close be-

hind her, asking in a pointed way, if she could tell "why Lord Gomer had persisted in going to York against her wishes, nay, orders?"

"I conclude Frank has gone on business, mamma," said Nest, gently; not that she wished to hide her share in his decision, but in settling the part she must act, to try what gentle firmness would do with her mother. She knew that she must ever keep herself in the background, and let Frank take his proper prominent part as master of himself and those around. She could not endure the thought of appearing to enter the lists against her mother-in-law.

"I am certain he has no business," said Lady Jane; "if any thing of importance had taken him to York, I ought to have been informed of it."

"I am going to try and sketch those superb beech trees," said Nest, "and I shall begin im-

mediately, to pass the time until Frank's return."

She was leaving the room, when Augusta, with heightened colour, begged her to remain.

"I wish," she said, "for a witness in the room, while I ask my mother, for the last time, when she will give permission for my marriage to take place."

This was the overflowing drop to the already full cup; and a storm of recrimination passed between mother and daughter; wherein the unfortunate witness suffered a great deal more than either. So degrading and painful a scene could not have been conceived by Nest; and when, having both exhausted themselves with rage and indignation, without anything further being definitely settled, but that Augusta threatened to elope.

Nest had sketched the lovely beech-trees, and drawn many plans, and otherwise tried to amuse her mind, long before she could regain her

composure, and feeling quite unequal to seeing the two antagonists again; she mounted to the school-room, and had luncheon there, at their dinner.

It was then that she had an opportunity of judging what sort of governess poor Mimi had.

Miss Croft might have been a good governess in former days, but being now between fifty and sixty, and having no one to please; suppose she formerly did take pains with her pupils, now she ran into the opposite extreme, and scarcely troubled her head about them at all. But that she might have some occupation, her sole thoughts and ideas were centred upon eating and drinking. The enormous quantity she contrived to make disappear, and the wine she drank, fully accounted for her heavy, stupid appearance. Nest was therefore quite prepared for her excuses, when she proposed their walk, feeling certain if she attempted

any exertion, she would surely have a fit of some sort.

"There," said Mimi, as they descended together with their large straw hats, and all Nest's drawing materials; "there! that's my governess; she will go to sleep now until tea-time, and she has been snoring all the morning, so that I might have been in any mischief, if I had liked."

"Poor dear Mimi! has she been your only governess?" said Nest.

"Yes, sister."

"And what has she taught you?"

"Nothing; for do you know, Nest—ah! how can I tell you—but really it is quite true, I can hardly read and write."

Tears of vexation rolled down Mimi's face, as she said this.

"And I should not have known how to do them as well as I do, if it had not been for mamma's page. Miss Croft used to bribe him

to come and teach me, while she slept, or read novels."

"How shocking!" said Nest, her tears flowing too.

"In fact, whatever I know, Alphonso taught me."

"Is the page that dark young man, who follows your mother with her parasol, when she goes out walking?"

"Yes," said Mimi; "and though she bought him from a lot of beggars, when a child, because he called her 'beautiful lady,' and he was so handsome himself, he does not like it at all. He says she has behaved very ill to him, for she was at great expense with his education, as long as the whim lasted; even having masters from York for him (a favour she never granted us). Yet, after all, she only made him her page; and he is very unhappy, because the servants treat him ill, and he says he would rather have remained a beggar, than be a trodden-down

servant. She has quite lost all fancy for him also, and treats him worse than all her servants. And he has no wages, or he would have saved some money and gone away long ago, that he might earn something by writing or book-keeping, or copying; he has to stand all day long now, by her door, in case she requires him for any thing, and that is why he can teach me no more."

"Oh! Mimi, my poor little Mimi, what a state for you to be in; and I suppose he told told you all this, and that is very wrong; she so proud,—to let her daughter be indebted to a common beggar-boy."

"Well, but he is very much better than most servants, I know, and has been always very good to me; and sometimes he has been the only person I have had to speak to for days."

"Well," said Nest, too much shocked to pursue the matter further; "don't let us talk

any more about it, I will be your governess. Come, we will go to the beech-trees, and I will give you a lesson in drawing." But she privately said to herself, "I think I ought to tell Frank."

## CHAPTER XXII.

NOTWITHSTANDING every encouragement from the new governess, Mimi's first attempts at sketching were very awkward. Nest showed her all she had done that morning.

"Now, Mimi, come and look at the spot from whence I have drawn this sketch. You see behind these two fine beech-trees, there is this ugly swampy bit of ground, with that pretty fountain in the middle. Now see, I have made it into a rose-garden, and drawn a little rustic house at the end,

and by draining this bit, I have imagined a little lake to be there, in this place; and all these things are pretty little houses for all sorts of water-fowl.

"Lovely! lovely!" said Mimi, "how clever you are; how beautifully you have drawn them. Do you believe this ugly bit of ground can ever be made into such a lovely spot as you have drawn?"

"We will try; first we will ask Frank to give us this piece of ground for our own."

"You need not ask; you have as much right to do what you like here as he has."

"Yes, yes, I dare say," said Nest; "but it is so nice to ask a favour of those you love; and those you love, are so pleased to grant it. I think what pleasure it will be to Frank, to come here some lovely evening; and sitting under the beech-trees, on this large rock, to see us working, running here,

hither and thither, as busy as bees. Then he will say to himself, (stroking his chin with complacency),

"'I am very much pleased with myself, that I gave those two girls this piece of ground. They have made it look very pretty, and they look very pretty, running about so busily watering, pruning, budding, and gathering. I think I should like to give them something more.'

"So he will call us, and we shall run, with lapwing's feet, having such grateful little hearts for his kind gift. Then he will say, 'I am pleased with you, Oh! you young girls, you have not abused my weak affection for you both, in giving you this piece of ground; you have made it pretty, you have made it sweet; moreover, you have given work to many of my old and infirm people; so, now, good young girls, ask a favour of me, and I will grant it; I feel disposed to be very

generous: say, then, if there is aught else in which I can please you.' "

"How amusing you are, Nest; pray go on."

"Then shall the maiden of the golden locks say, 'Inestimable brother, and dear Lord, I would I had two hundred new rose-trees and I would fifty of them were moss roses, and a reasonable quantity of them of that vulgar, but most sweet cabbage rose, so that I might, with the leaves, make rose-water, to pour upon the hands of my high and mighty and most dear brother.'

"Then shall he say, 'Blue-eyed maiden, your request is granted; but instead of two hundred roses, you shall have four hundred, and if that is not enough, six hundred.'

"Then shall he turn to the other and say, 'What wishes hast thou, old Nimble-foot?' and she shall say, 'Dreaded lord and most honoured husband, will you issue a decree

that no sugar-plums are suffered to approach the rose-garden.'"

"Nessy, Nessy, you droll thing, sugar-plums, indeed! you know you will ask nothing of the sort."

"And may I, beloved spouse, have leave," continued Nest, "to examine all pockets, and throw them thus?" and as she spoke, all the sugar-plums were taken out of Mimi's pockets, and thrown into the fountain.

"Oh! my poor sugar-plums! why do you dislike them so much, sister?"

"I do not dislike a few, now and then, dear little baby; but you are eating them all day long, and then you can eat no dinner, and therefore have no good food. So all sorts of little odd things come on your face; look at this great roughness, and that odd thing up there. I shall never have a pretty Mimi, if you go on eating such quantities. Besides, Miss, I am your governess."

"Dear, dear sweet governess, how I shall

love you. But, really, do you know how I came to eat sugar-plums? Mamma and Miss Croft used, and do, put me into such passions, and I got so severely punished, for answering them, that at last, to prevent myself doing so, I used to put one of those large sweet things into my mouth; and they are so good, I cannot open my mouth again until they are all melted; and so I stopped myself from answering them."

"I allow that is a reasonable excuse; but now you must learn, under your new governess, to refrain from answering, from a better motive. Did you never hear the Eastern fable, about the two angels?"

"No," said Mimi, "do tell me; I love your stories."

"The Arabians say, when a child is born, two angels are immediately appointed to guard and attend it through life. One of these angels is white, and the other black. When the child, or rather the human being—

for they attend him from birth to death,—says a good prayer, or does a worthy action, the white angel writes it down immediately on fair white tablets. If he does anything wrong, either in thought, word, or deed, the dark angel folds his wings over his face; but if he repents before the sun sets, the angel looks up again; if he does not repent, the dark angel sorrowfully writes it down. And when sleep has fallen on the eyes of their charge, they ascend to Heaven, and give up their tablets, that the contents may be recorded in the Book of Life, which is to judge them in the Last Day."

"Oh! Nest, how beautiful! you wish me to be good, and do right, from a feeling of right. I will try. Under your care, I think I may hope a little. Do not think me silly, especially after your beautiful fable,—but supposing I left off sugar-plums, should I ever become as pretty as you?"

"Oh! yes, quite as pretty, I should think," said Nest, innocently.

"And how pretty do you think you are?' said a voice behind them.

Mimi screamed, Nest sprang up.

It was the Duke of Nairn.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

"Oh! cousin, how mean of you, to come and listen to us," said Mimi.

"Ah! Mimi, how wicked of you, to talk that which you think others ought not to hear," said the Duke.

"It was nothing we ought not to say, it was really good improving talk," retorted Mimi.

"Don't I want improving as much as Miss Gomer? do you wish to keep all good things to yourself?" said he.

"But what did you hear? Tell me. Ah!

you must have heard that last silly speech of mine," said Mimi.

"I heard a great deal of good before; I am so much penetrated by it, I mean to make amends for listening, by immediately presenting the intended rose-garden, with all the newest, best, and rarest roses, that are to be found in the world."

"Oh! cousin, how long you must have been behind that tree."

"Well, I own I was there some time; really, I would be very sorry, if I could. But I was so happy, and derived so much pleasure, not to say improvement, from your conversation, I cannot find one atom of repentance in my heart for it."

"Then," said Nest, "we will forgive you this once. And upon a promise that you will never do so again, we will take you into our councils."

"Thank you, for to confess all my delinquencies, I hardly think I should have dis-

covered myself, had I not been devoured with curiosity to see the plans."

"What a time he must have been merely listening, Nest," said Mimi.

"But I have confessed—I try to make atonement; my dark angel has already unfolded his drooping wings. So you must forgive me also."

"Indeed!" said Nest, blushing again, "you must not thus quote me; or remember my little stories, which are only meant to amuse Mimi."

"I am, however, so much delighted, Mimi, with your new governess, that I think I shall apply for the situation of under-pupil. But now let me see the drawings."

"Do you mean to say, little sister, that you really did these? Beautiful! quite beautiful!" he exclaimed, in delight. "What talent, what taste."

"I thought," said Mimi, "they must be beautifully done; for they looked to me like

the scene itself. Now, did you ever know such a darling thing as Nest, cousin?"

"No, I do not think I ever did," said he, gravely.

"I had good masters," said Nest, smiling; "and the part of Wales in which I lived, rejoiced in so much beauty, it was impossible to exist without being inspired to become an artist."

"But, little sister, this plan of the rose-garden shows consummate judgment and taste. And this, I suppose, is the ground-plan of the rustic cottage? Nothing could be better. Really, you would be invaluable to me, and you must lend me your assistance, like a good little sister; for I have at this present moment a dozen cottages I ought to build, and all the plans that have been sent me I dislike. Those that are ornamented, are uncomfortable inside; and those that are comfortable, are most square, hideous things outside."

"I will draw a rough sketch of a cottage

we built at Coadmore, that I think will combine the picturesque with the useful."

"But how came you to make architecture a branch of your education, little sister?" said the Duke, as he watched her rapid pencil, bringing to light almost the very cottage he wanted.

"My dear old granny was obliged to educate me in a different manner to most girls; because she knew, if she died, and I did not marry, and had no one to look after me, all the care of her property and mine would devolve upon me. And she did not like me to be ignorant upon such important things."

"And so, I suppose, you know a great deal about farming, land, crops, tenant-right, and landlords' liabilities."

"Oh! yes," said Nest; "it is more than three years, since my grandmother gave up all business into my hands. And we had an excellent steward, who came two or three nights a week, to enlighten my feminine mind,

as to book-keeping, double-entry, and all sorts of dry details."

The Duke took off his hat, and made her a low bow, saying to Mimi, "It becomes you and I, Mimi, to change our manners to this lady. Here have I presumed to call her 'little sister,' in a familiar manner, and she going to turn out a great Welsh princess, more learned than Solon, more wise than Solomon."

"Ah!" said Nest, "I think you very unkind now; you ought to know, even better than I do, that genius and learning are nothing to the happiness of life, without affections. Somewhere I have read, but I forget in what book, that the heart is more concerned in executing great purposes, than the highest genius, or greatest learning."

"True," said the Duke, "very true. But believe me not unkind, my sister. I am, in truth, astonished, that a young slight girl, with a little angel's face, should hide under such an

exterior the talent and judgment that belong more to the male character."

"I do not know that there is in my character the depth and solidity that generally distinguish the stronger sex. You know we females may reasonably boast of being more quick-witted than you; but I doubt we must give the palm to you, where great depth of thinking is required. But here is your cottage."

"Thank you, it is almost exactly what I require; the only alteration wanting, is your knowledge of the situation. That, I hope to remedy, when you visit Nairn; for I am the bearer of a note from my mother, asking you all to go there for a few days."

"I should like it so much; but are we not, Mimi, to receive visitors all next week? Mamma said, after Frank and I had appeared at church, all the neighbourhood would call, and that we must, what is called, 'sit up,' and make ourselves agreeable."

"So you call her mamma," said the Duke.

"Yes," said Nest, looking astonished at his manner.

"Well! it is very good of you, seeing she does not act like a mother. Now what are you going to call me?"

"I don't know," said Nest, shyly.

"Call him cousin, as I do," said Mimi.

"No, she must not call me cousin; I don't seem to like that," returned the Duke.

"Then she must call you brother, for you call her sister," said Mimi.

"No, brother is worse," said the Duke, quickly. "You must call me by my name, Elmore, will you?"

"Yes, if you like it," said Nest, drawing her large hat over her eyes.

"Then when you come to Nairn, Nest, will you draw me the plan of a cottage?"

"Yes," said Nest.

"Yes, what?" said the Duke.

"Yes, if you wish it," returned Nest.

"That is not what you ought to say," said the Dake; "you know quite well what I mean."

"Yes, Elmore," said Nest.

"Ah! quite right; now you see I am very good, to insist upon your calling me Elmore at once, otherwise it would have been tumbling about at the end of your tongue long before your shy little lips would have dared to utter it."

"My goodness!" said Mimi, "if here is not mamma coming—I shall cut."

"I shall what?" said the Duke; "pray look at your governess; quite ashamed at such language. Beg her pardon immediately, and remain like a lady, until your mother arrives. By the bye, now I look at you, are you really Mimi? tidy hair, clean frock, sandalled shoes, fresh colour. Is this the new governess's doing?"

Nest was advancing to meet Lady Jane, when Mimi replied,

"Oh, cousin! she is so good to me, and so gentle to mamma, and such an angel in the house. If anybody can do us good, it will be her."

"I am very much of your mind, Mimi, and seeing that you know her value. Can I leave it in your hands, if your mother should annoy her too much, that I am told of it? for, I believe, I have more influence over her than most; your mother I mean."

"I promise, cousin; promise faithfully."

## CHAPTER XXIV.

Lady Jane was taking her daily stroll, with the dark-looking page, (though he was a young man of two or three-and-twenty, and not disproportioned in size), about forty yards behind her, carrying a parasol, an umbrella, a camp-stool, and two or three books. She could not but be struck by the graceful, pretty way in which her daughter-in-law advanced towards her, saying with a beaming, bright countenance—

"I am delighted you have ventured out, mamma, it is so lovely."

"Thank you, my dear," said Lady Jane, quite graciously. "I hope you have enjoyed your walk. But is that the Duke?"

Her brow darkened; after the storm of the morning, she in reality pined for a little peace and quiet. And the gentle pleasure beaming on Nest's countenance, as she advanced to meet her, seemed like oil on the raging waters. But it was unpardonable in the Duke not first paying his respects to her, before he sought the society of those girls.

As if divining her thoughts, the Duke said,

"I am glad, Lady Jane, you have arrived; for when I saw female forms beneath the beech trees, I, of course, concluded you were one; and therefore, sent my horse on to the Castle, and walked across the park, to save time."

"How long have you been here?" she said, slightly mollified.

"Just in time to hear these young ladies talk about a rose-garden," said the Duke, gravely looking at them both.

"I do not imagine they either of them understand any thing about the matter," said Lady Jane.

"I was telling Mimi, mamma," said Nest, who could not bear subterfuge, "that this would make a lovely rose-garden, and—"

"I beg I may hear no more on the matter," said Lady Jane; "I shall certainly countenance nothing of the kind."

Mimi sought in her pockets for a sugar-plum in vain; but the Duke, taking up Nest's sketch-book, came to their rescue.

"What! forbid the rose-garden, when I have sketches here, done by a first-rate artist, unequalled in beauty, and drawn expressly for this place."

"Oh! my dear Duke! that quite alters the case; if you have taken this trouble, of course I must consent; really these sketches are beautiful."

"But, mamma—" broke in Nest.

"Did you ever see any thing so clever, Jane?" said the Duke, hastily.

"You know—" said Nest, eagerly, turning to him.

"They are quite artistic," said Lady Jane, "very clever bits indeed. I am an artist myself. No one knows better how to appreciate real talent. Ah! here is a cottage; for the Nairn property, I see; pray who is your friend, my dear Duke?"

"Oh! quite a young person, a natural sort of genius," said the Duke.

"Pray tell her," said Nest, in a low, earnest voice.

"I should like to be introduced to him; I very much wish for some new ideas about cottages on this estate. I shall patronize him, certainly. Pray take an early opportunity of bringing him here. But I must continue my walk, only to the lime-trees. I consider it a duty to take a certain degree of exercise every

day. Will you accompany me, my dear Duke?"

"I will follow you, Jane; at present I am settling a sort of dispute with Lady Gomer; she has displeased me."

"I beg you will pay no attention to such silly children; and assure the young artist that I will adopt his plan of a rose-garden at once. I will superintend it myself."

"You! my dear Jane, you!" said the Duke, laughing, "really take the trouble of making a rose garden? No, no, leave it to these girls. If you wish to try your hand in any thing floricultural, a conservatory would be much more appropriate for you."

"I believe you are right," said Lady Jane; "but may I beg, young ladies, that you are careful to run Lord Gomer into no great expense; he can ill afford to have his money thrown away on a rose-garden. That is an excellent thought of yours, my dear Duke, about the conservatory. We want one sadly.

Perhaps your young architect can help us. Farewell for the present."

"Oh! cousin, thank you," said Mimi; "how nearly we were losing, not only our rose-garden, but all pleasure in it. If you had not managed so cleverly, it would have been quite done for."

"But," said Nest, "you should not—that is, I mean, you should; how could you suffer such a mistake to pass unexplained?"

"It was all your fault," said the Duke; "if you had said, 'Pray, Elmore, explain,' I should have done it immediately. Now I must look forward to the pleasure of seeing you go to Lady Jane, and say with triumphant air, 'I am the great architect, I am the wonderful genius.' It will be so like you to boast, that I am quite anxious for her to return."

A little joyful cry from Nest startled them both; and like a young fawn, she bounded away, and was down the ha-ha, passing the

last beech tree, before they could draw their breath ; there she paused, and they could see her white figure half hiding behind it. There was nothing to show, as reason for her flight, but a horseman in the distance.

"I declare, I suppose it must be Frank," said Mimi at last.

"I declare, what you declare, seems probable," said her cousin. "But she has quick eyes. I wonder now if he has seen her. You see, Mimi, she is too bashful to go on, for the servant is behind, just come into view. I'll bet you a sugar-plum, he does not see her."

"I have no sugar-plums to bet, cousin," said Mimi, mournfully ; "but there ! look ! he has turned his horse's head—if he does not see Nest, he sees us. What a pace he is coming. Ha ! ha ! cousin, if you had bet, you would have lost. He does see her ; there, now it is certain. Gilbert is called to take his horse, and they are both coming here ; and we shall know about our garden."

"I own I have lost my bet; I'll pay you next week, my dear."

"Am I to go to Nairn?" asked Mimi, anxiously.

"Yes, my mother has asked you, and of course, Miss Croft, that you may lose nothing. But we will provide Miss Croft with ample employment of her favourite kind; so that there may be no rivalship between the two governesses. We will keep her in a happy state of doze all the time."

"Thank you, thank you," said Mimi, joyfully; "but mamma, is she going?"

"No, my dear, your grandmother is coming, and I don't want Nairn to be turned into a bear-garden."

"We shall be too happy," said Mimi.

"Well! I must be going, child; make my respects to your mother, and the couple under the trees there. It does not do for a disappointed bachelor like me to be witnessing such affectionate meetings—it sours the temper."

"Dear cousin, you sour! well, if you say that again, I shall believe, Nest, that mamma is gentle."

"Naughty girl, good bye."

## CHAPTER XXV.

The customary appearance of the bridal party at church, took place the next day; and though little could be seen of the observed of all, the bride, yet the good old clergyman saw quite enough to send a glow of pleasure through his heart.

In the quiet stillness of the young Lady Gomer, the reverent humility with which she knelt and prayed, the absorbed attention she gave to the whole service, he read her pious feelings, and augured from them the happiest results to the people under his charge.

For it is a fact, no less true than melancholy, that all people, more or less, richer or poorer, are swayed by bad example. From the humblest cottage to the highest palace, this fatal habit of soothing over the wakeful conscience by saying to it, "Others do it, why should not I?" may be seen and noticed. And while at all times it has a baneful effect, lowering the standard of human virtue to human judgment, in no case is it likely to prove so deleterious as in a country domain, where, far and near, the property around belongs to the same person. Then, in the place of their Creator, or their conscience, their landlord is substituted: his actions form the criterion of theirs. What is the habit of the people at the great house, is likewise, in a humbler manner, the habit of every house and cottage around.

In these days of conscientious and devoted clergymen; where the inhabitants are unfortunate in the example set them, by the chief man of the parish; an under-current of better feel-

ing is sometimes seen. But more often it leads to heart-aches and heart-burnings, sore conflicts with the spirit, sore griefs and disappointments, in the pious, hard-working clergyman, and divides his parish into two sections.

The good, conscientious, humble, but strong-minded Mr. Clifford, was an example of this latter class. All his life, at least all the life he had spent at Gomer, had been one steadfast struggle against the evil example set at Gomer Castle. And yet the monstrous incubus grew and flourished, in spite of his earnest, prayerful, unceasing watchfulness over his flock. Night and day, in heat and cold, sunshine or rain, health or sickness, he was equally at the service of his people.

And then all he asked of them, was attention to the welfare of their immortal souls; some due regard to the commandments of their great and mighty God; some little show of thankfulness for the daily mercies showered upon them. One wild act, one foolish word,

one evil example set them, by the great house, would undo the work of months.

And the wonder and vexation was, how people could be influenced, as certainly they were, by small, mean things, suffering them to cast into the shade "The weightier matters of the Law."

Oh! ye, who have wealth and are elevated to one mole-hill, upon the summit of which the eyes of a few hundreds are fixed, remember your responsibilities and duties. Think not your higher station gives you greater latitude. It is the reverse—more circumspection, more rigid adherence to the law, more faith in action, more thankfulness in deed, should mark your way. Have not ten talents been given to you? Then put your Lord's money to usury, that he may receive his interest at the proper time.

Mr. Clifford had borne him through his many disappointments, as became a patient Christian man; nevertheless, like many others in the dis-

trict of Gomer, he laid his plans, built many hopes, and fed himself with patience, until the coming of age of the young Lord Gomer.

That he should marry early, had been a secret wish of Mr. Clifford's, for that step alone would be the key to unlock the present adamantine state of affairs.

The marriage took place so suddenly, the young bride was so utterly unknown, and from Lady Jane's conduct, the little that could be said, was so unfavourable, that the good man could only pray God that a change for good might take place, without feeling that there was much hope to warrant his prayer.

In the welcome that had been given by the people to the bride and bridegroom, Mr. Clifford had not been behind-hand in assisting. But all he could tell Mrs. Clifford, on his return from the introduction, &c., was, that the new lady governess was a pretty little pale girl, with large alarmed eyes; the tears filling

them, as he supposed, through fright, at the boisterous welcome of the people.

So fear, during all that week, would knock at his heart, mocking him with the vision of a little simple being, such as the first Lady Gomer, and threatening him with no change in the rule of pride and injustice.

But the first glance, as she walked up the aisle on her husband's arm, convinced Mr. Clifford that the new Lady Gomer was not insignificant-looking; but tall, and dignified, even in the presence of the tall and dignified Lady Jane.

The wistful glances that he could not but cast now and then towards the object of his thoughts, each time sent a glow through his heart; so that when he ascended the pulpit, to preach to his people, the hopes rising so buoyantly within him, seemed to gild his always eloquent tongue with double earnestness and persuasion.

He preached upon the duties and delights

of early piety, the happiness of devoting the days of strong and joyous youth to the service of their Great Father in Heaven, which brought its own reward; the calm, the peace, the freedom from peevish vexations, the frivolous passions of youth; the mind delighting in the pursuit of pure and simple occupations, the heart overflowing with the thankfulness of a happy, contented spirit; the soul resting secure in the promises and love of God.

All these formed a strong contrast to his description of ungodly youth; the proud, reckless independence, so often having to eat its own words, as it were; the hours of despondency and weakness that follow the steps of earthly pride, the aching void, that feels a want, yet recklessly throws off, as foolish, the pleadings of the good angel. The hurrying passions, that being under no control, lead the undisciplined mind to many an act that leaves its sting deep and poignant. All the more from repentance forming no part of his creed,

atonement no act that he could possibly demean himself to adopt, selfish, hardened, and boastingly independent, he goes on his way, and knows not that he is poor, maimed, blind, and halting. That he bears within him no safeguard against the storms of passion, the ills of fortune, the troubles of life, and the stings of death. And that should he happily awake out of this state, and turn as a penitent, he yet will remember the days of his proud, irreligious, unthankful youth, and mourn that he has only the dregs of a misspent life to offer to that God, who is filling him now with the bliss of piety.

Mr. Clifford perceived the large eyes were fixed upon him, but with no alarmed look. Tears perhaps just rose, now and then, at his earnest words; but not to overflow, only to express how the heart felt what the uplifted eyes spoke. Ere he left his pulpit, he privately blessed and praised God for the sight he had seen.

Nest had been too much engaged with her devotions, to observe that she was the loadstar that attracted all eyes in the congregation. Some with similar feelings to Mr. Clifford. All their earthly weal depended upon a change; and much as she had thought upon the responsibility of herself, and her husband, in their high position, Nest would have been startled, had she known the agony that was in some hearts, while their eyes seemed to look her through.

She was abashed, coming out of church, at the crowding and crushing round her; while Frank's eyes kindled with anger, at what he considered their rudeness.

"Fall back, people! fall back!" he cried, in a loud, angry voice.

"Oh! don't mind it, Frank, don't," said Nest, looking smilingly round; "you will soon know me all very well; I shall hope soon, you will not look upon me as a stranger."

They opened a way immediately, asking

pardon on all sides, while a few murmured blessings met her ear.

Lady Jane was already seated in the carriage, but Nest whispered to her husband, a petition to walk home, in which Mimi joined.

So the carriage rolled away, and they, without further molestation, pursued their walk; but not before Nest had noticed a tall pale woman, whose eyes seemed so fixed upon her, that she looked as if turned to stone.

"Who is that tall woman, with such a very melancholy look?" said Nest, feeling quite uncomfortable under her fixed gaze.

"Why, it is Maggie, my dear Maggie," said Frank, with pleasure; "come here, Maggie, come here, you must come and speak to my wife; she was my nurse, Nessy, and all the happiness I ever had in childhood I owe to her."

A gleam of such unutterable pleasure shone in Maggie's hollow eyes, that Nest was quite

startled by the sudden change. Nevertheless she came forward with a quiet, calm demeanour.

"Oh! Maggie, Maggie, how ill you look," said Lord Gomer; "I hope nothing is the matter—you must tell me, if there is; but now, I know you will think of nothing—but my wife, Nessy. I think my nurse loves me almost as much as you do."

"No, no," said Nest, smiling and blushing; "I will allow no one to do that; and Maggie would scold me the first, if I did so, would you not?" taking her hand.

"The Father of us all, bless you, my lady," said Maggie; her eyes looking as if they would steal down into Nest's inmost soul.

Frank noticed her eager, almost devouring look; and while Nest was pained by the anxious, wistful gaze, Frank could not help saying—

"Well, Maggie, don't you think she is pretty? you know you always told me I

should have the pick of the land to choose from. A queen in beauty, and an angel in goodness."

"She is very young, my Lord," said Maggie, thoughtfully, as if speaking to herself.

"But she is a rock of sense," said Frank, laughing gaily.

"She needs it; ay, she'll need sense, patience, and discretion," said the nurse, in the same dreamy manner.

"Now, Maggie, you have quite disappointed me; I expected you to go into such raptures, about my wife, and you keep mumbling all sorts of nonsense to yourself."

An irrepressible glance of meaning had shone in Nest's eyes at the nurse's words, who caught it. Such responses only come from the heart's depths; with a flush of delight Maggie turned to Lord Gomer, and said, "Oh! my Lord, wha can luik at tha ootside, when an angel's dwelling within?"

"Good Nursy," said Mimi, "I knew you

would find out that pretty soon. It is not so much that Nest's eyes are so large, so deeply grey—it is because I can see so far down into them, that I love them; and the further down you look, the more beautiful they seem. But, oh! Nest, I am not yet good enough to see quite into your heart. There is something hinders me, when you look—when you look as you did in church."

"Foolish child!" said Nest, blushing; "but I think Nursy does not look well."

"No, that she does not," said Frank.

"I am pure well, thank you, my Lord."

"But is Reuben well, and young Reuben, and Morris?"

"All pure well, thank you, my Lord."

"But where are they? I never before knew any of them miss church."

"They are away to the north, working on the Edinbro' line."

"But why are they away? why does not Wilson give them work here; that you may

all be at home together, for I suppose you don't like to leave your mother?"

"There's just nae work for them, Mr. Wilson says; and tho' I dinna mind the bairns ganging out, Reuben was obligated to go, for our bit ground was wanted."

"What for?" said Frank, his face crimsoning, and his eyes flashing; "but I know it, I know it."

"Dinna fash yourself, my Lord; see, ye bring the blood into my Leddy's face; she's no use to yer tantrums, ye'll hae to be gentle wi her."

"Yes, Frank," said Nest coaxingly, "we will only be angry when we cannot mend matters. Now this can easily be set to rights, for you know we shall want some work-people for our rose-garden; shall we not, Mimi?"

"Yes, certainly; but I think Frank has cause to be angry; mamma's at the bottom of it all, as she is of every thing, ill-na——"

"Hoost, hoost, Miss Mimi," said nurse,

"we'll be getting our rights, I am thinking, and then we'll hae o'er-much joy, to be thinking o' past thrangs."

"Send for Reuben home, at all events, Margaret," said Lord Gomer. And with his brow still flushed and angry, he walked on, the two girls following him.

"It is ever thus," said Frank; when Nest, putting her little hand through his arm, drew as closely as she could to his side. "What I love and like, is to be scouted, scorned, and trampled. Merely because that poor woman is my foster-mother, and stood between me and many a childish, but still not the less bitter sorrow, my mother hates her. I never come home, that I do not find she has been persecuted in some way. It is too bad, it makes me hate the place."

"No, Frank, it makes you love it more, and renders it the more imperative that we remain here to do our duty."

"True, Nest, but you have yet to learn

what my mother can be, when her demon pride is roused; she suffers nothing to come between her and her wrath."

"But this is our place, these are our people; we are placed here to do our duty by them."

"How can it be done with so grievous a spirit to contend with; mocking and taunting me?"

"We will try, dear, quietly and without intention of offence. Besides, we are not always—you know, dear Frank, what I mean; we do not expect that."

"I understand, my Nessie; but what weary scenes we shall have, what annoyances to undergo."

"Oh, don't think about them," said Nessie, gaily; "remember what the wise book saith: 'Let not ills that never happened, chiefly make thee miserable.' We will be 'cheerful expectors of the best,' that we may be rewarded with good."

"That's what Frank and I never were accus-

tomed to," said Mimi. "We fly into such tremendous rages, that there is nothing to be said when it is over, and then mamma has all her own way. At present, I should like to take mamma up in my arms, and lock her up in nurse's cottage all alone for a week. Then, perhaps, I could breathe a little more comfortably than I do at present."

"And I should like to be civil and kind to her, meet her objections with reason, and if she would not listen to that, I should quietly have it done, not in ostentatious opposition, but just to let her see that I must do it, because I consider it my duty."

"Good law. I should like to see mamma when she found out that any thing had been done, which she had said should not be. The house would not hold her, she would be in such a passion."

"Oh, my pupil, what an expression; I must punish you for it. But do you not perceive, Mimi, what an immediate advantage you would

gain? Did you not just now allow what you lost by giving way to fits of passion?"

"I see clearly what you mean, Nessie," said her husband; "and as I faithfully promised the other day, so do I mean to do my best. You would not believe in a sudden reformation, Nest, but you will believe me when I say, that I think your plan of forbearance, but of firmness, is the only course to pursue."

"Any thing to get rid of her," said Mimi, so *sotto voce*, that the others took no notice of it.

"To-morrow we will arrange all about the rose-garden," said Frank, cheerfully.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

Early in the morning, when Lady Jane was wrapped in peaceful slumbers, did the rose-garden progress; for though it was not the time of year to transplant them, there was a world of business to do in planning, draining, levelling, and above all, building the cottage.

Fresh and happy, the three labourers appeared at the ten o'clock breakfast, too hungry to mind black looks, too joyous to care for angry words. Then Mimi disappeared, ostensibly to be benefited by Miss Croft's learning and accomplishments, but in reality to pursue a system of improvement suggested by Nest.

Lady Jane, Augusta, and Nest, spent the morning together, the latter drawing, Augusta in listlessly rolling about, and Lady Jane in incessant teazing of them both.

The first announcement of visitors, in honour of the bridal pair, drew Frank into the room, and, until six o'clock, each day of that week, they had to play the agreeable to the numerous callers.

Here Frank had much need to exercise his newly-acquired habit of forbearance. For while his mother left all visitors whom she considered neither of consequence or importance to Nest, she monopolised the entire attention of those whom Frank was most anxious should know and appreciate his wife.

He read, as if her heart was open before him, his mother's motive; and while he bit his lips, and suppressed the wrath rising within him, he felt himself powerless, more powerless than the weakest leaf to resist the breeze, to effect a change.

There could be no doubt that few could look at Lady Gomer without admiration; yet Frank was beginning to feel that her faultless beauty was her least perfection; that young and girlish as she looked, she had within her a fund of pure thought and intelligence, such as to make her an acceptable companion to the highest and most learned in the room.

And yet, as he looked at the groups before him, there was his graceful, peerless Nest, bending down her head to listen to the Yorkshire compliments of the fat little fubsy Mrs. Armstrong, the doctor's wife, looking as if she was interested in all she said, and smiling her prettiest in return.

While Lady Jane, in a distant corner, unbending from all her high stateliness, was whisperingly talking to the lovely, witty, aristocratic Countess of Y., and Frank knew they were talking of Nest. Nay, he heard his mother unconsciously say, louder than was prudent,

"Very, very pretty, but sadly young and childish."

This could not be borne; so, walking up to the pair, he said, "Lady Y., pray do not let my mother monopolize you altogether. Nest, have you any room on your sofa?"

Lady Y. was by no means ill-pleased to escape, for she really was anxious to know the young bride, and did not think Lady Jane's conversation, generally of herself and her sacrifices, worth a long drive. She admired the lovely blush that crimsoned young Lady Gomer's cheek, as she rose to make room, and still more the graceful courtesy with which she still bent her head to hear Mrs. Fubsy Armstrong's wheezing little remarks.

Lady Jane was delighted at what she considered Nest's want of tact. Frank had to talk to Lady Y. himself, for having got the ear of Lady Gomer, Mrs. Armstrong seemed determined to keep it. Luckily, she asked Nest if

she had read some particular book, to which she replied:

"No, I have not; but perhaps, Madam, you know it," turning to her neighbour.

This was a good opening. Frank took possession of Mrs. Armstrong, and Lady Y. went away, after half an hour's conversation with Nest, mentally saying:

"Childish! foolish! poor stupid woman! what a most fortunate change for us, to have that lovely, intelligent, noble-looking girl, instead of that proud, haughty woman, who always seems to me, as if there was some unseemly odour in the air, her nose is so ridiculously elevated."

This was one of the most fortunate among many instances, that occurred during the week of visitors. The Duke was there one day, and as if he had been fully informed of all that had passed, and was passing, he kept such strict ward and watch over Lady Jane, that she was unable to do more than insinuate the

young Lady Gomer was sadly young and inexperienced.

"I should be remarkably glad," said the Duke, in a loud frank voice, "if being young and inexperienced, would make me at all like Lady Gomer."

In fact, he had been let a little behind the scenes, by hearing a gentleman say, in speaking of Lady Gomer:

"Ah! we called there yesterday; pretty young woman! pity she is such a goose."

"Had you much conversation with her?" said the Duke.

"No, not much, that is none, I may say; but I had it from excellent authority."

"Ah! Lady Jane, I have no doubt," said the Duke; "but a something strikes me that the goose will reign at Gomer."

"Ah! indeed, you don't say so. Well, I wish it may be so; at present it is a very disagreeable, uncomfortable house to stay at, and I have thought of giving up the acquaintanceship."

"I think, do you know, it's just about getting worth the trouble of keeping," said the Duke, drily.

"I am very glad to hear you say so, for your authority and taste are undeniably good."

It was this conversation that drove the Duke over to see how matters were progressing, and interfere, as we have seen, in Lady Jane's plans.

His presence also cheered Frank, who further relieved his feelings by a confidential disburthening of his mind. Upon what subject, we may well spare the reader. However, it was a very uncomfortable week, and but for the rose-garden in the fresh early mornings, and a moonlight ride or trot, could not have been got over without some phials of wrath pouring forth their contents.

As it was, Lady Jane had partially achieved her object, and was therefore pretty well satisfied. It takes rather more than double the quantity of virtue and sense to outweigh, in the

estimation of the common world, rank and beauty.

Though she was mean, proud, not over-wise, (poor thing! she had been taught to look to no higher standard than herself, and that standard will degenerate with no good from above to strengthen it, and a rather more than average share of human passions to weaken it)—wholly selfish, absorbed in self, yet she was a beautiful woman, and a Duke's daughter. So the world was divided about Lady Gomer; and as that same world is generally in extremes, not so much guided by what is right, as by which way the crowd is going, so they verged upon the notion that Lady Jane was an object of pity. So young a woman, so beautiful, such a devoted mother, so long her own mistress, such very *distingué* manners, so fascinating if she liked, to be turned out in so sudden a manner by a Welsh girl, that no one knew any thing about, was hard. For once in her life, Lady Jane had a flickering flame of popularity, while

Nest was extremely busy, thinking of nothing but placing Maggie in a new cottage, when built, as mistress of the ducks and poultry, and Reuben with her, as master and keeper of the rose-garden.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

It will not do to dwell too long on this history.

The visit to Nairn was paid. In the quiet, saint-like Duchess, Nest's heart felt she realized the yearning she had ever had for a mother. The benign delight that sat on her fine countenance, as they gaily laughed and talked around her, drawing her into their youthful, wild schemes, whether she would or no, was beautiful to see. So that her son, when she laughed at some greater nonsense than usual, and the little tiny grandmamma clapped her

hands with glee, affected to put on an aggrieved air, and said their conduct was too youthful and sprightly for him. He must really leave them, and shut himself up with old Stewart, that he might hear a little common sense.

That same old Stewart had been especially delighted at the kind recognition of Lady Gomer, calling him her first Yorkshire friend.

"Hah! yer Grace," said he, some time after, "deu ye think me a mon o' sense? Hoo! noo! about yon lassie, (save her leddyship's Grace, ca'ing her ony sich neame). But sma' blame to me, if there's no mony a body wad hae knocket agin the tenth commandment, whether or nay. Hey, but I wad yer Grace had getten glint o' her first."

"Something more common-place must do for me, Stewart, I doubt. There are no such Welsh princesses to be picked up every day."

"Then she must be summut oot o' the common, or wha could na I joost think o' her,

as I might doo o' ony other young body. I'se joost stricken wi' her, yer Grace."

"That's rather unlucky, Stewart, for me; for I want all your wits to help me to look over these plans for the new cottages."

"My certie, but ye hae lighted on a braw plan the noo. And wha may ye hae gotten thae grand picters fra, yer Grace? I am thinking it's no a paid mon has dune these. He has pit owre mony strokes in for lucre."

"Ah! ha!" laughed the Duke, "you are truly a man of sense, Stewart; no real architect would have bestowed so much pains, or what you call strokes, in a drawing plan. You are right, man, it was no architect. But now, who do you think it was?"

"Hoot! yer Grace, my time's owre precious to be thrawn awa; and I'm no ways a gay guesser."

"Then you must prepare to break the tenth commandment again. They are all done, and done for me, by Lady Gomer."

"Hear to that noo, and me thrice her years, and no able to do mair nor a straight line. Deed she's owre gifted, yer Grace, and I'll be thinking her something no canny."

"Canny or not, these are the cottages you and I have been hammering our wits to concoct, and all to no purpose. I showed her the different situations this morning, and this is the result."

"Heh, it's grand, joost the identicle. Dearie me! I wad yer Grace had seen her first."

"Come, get away with your wearisome song, and take the plans home with you to study. Here, Mimi, a word with you," continued the Duke, calling her. "You know I lost a sugar-plum to you the other day, under the beech trees. Here is my debt;" and he held up a little tiny watch, with all its fit appurtenances.

"Cousin!" said Mimi, breathless and bewildered.

"What! do you not like this sort of sugar-

plum, Mimi?" said the Duke, "shouting out such a great uncomfortable cousin!"

"Oh! cousin!" exclaimed Mimi, panting, "is it a watch?"

"Yes! would you rather have a sugar-plum?"

"Is it a real watch, and is it really for me?"

"Hold it, like a baby, to your ear, and hear it tick; it is really yours, Mimi. But you remember our bargain?"

"Yes," said Mimi, "about Nest; but a watch! this watch! my watch!"

"Yes, your watch; and whenever you look at it, remember your promise, always to tell me if any thing disagreeable is occurring at Gomer, in which you think my interference will do good. Are you listening, child?"

"Oh! cousin; I have always so longed for a watch; but I must hide it. Oh! I shall not be able to wear it; mamma will take it from me."

"If she does, I will give you another; and

if she takes that, still you shall have another, if you will only remember what I tell you, Mimi."

"Cousin, I will; I promise you, that I will. I know all you mean, I quite understand. I was a little overcome at thinking this watch, this lovely watch, was really mine; you know, cousin, how few things I have ever had of my own. But I love Nest more than I can tell. No cat shall watch a mouse more faithfully than I will watch her. I cannot shield her from any thing, because you know, at present, she shields both Frank and me. And do you know, cousin, she manages mamma to perfection. That is, she does not manage, but she is so sweetly affectionate; and at the same time, so quietly determined, she has done everything she liked at present. Mamma cannot understand her one bit, and looks at her so earnestly at times, when Nest has turned off one of her cutting speeches in her sweet way. Suppose now, cousin, she

really made her love her at last. Wouldn't you be surprised?"

"Very much so, Mimi. I should not then wonder if Nest undertook to marry me to your Aunt Julia. At present, about the most impossible thing I know."

"Oh, my watch; my darling watch! How I love you, cousin, for being so good; but I don't know how to thank you. I must run and show it to Nessie and Frank."

The happiness of those two or three days was so great, that all felt, when a purpose messenger arrived, hot and breathless from Gomer, that they ought to be prepared for something disagreeable.—Augusta had eloped.

Lady Jane wrote in the bitterest terms, commanding her son's instant return, and hot pursuit of the fugitive. It might have been supposed, from her letter, that Augusta had purposely, aggravatingly, and determinately violated every moral and filial duty to the tenderest,

best, most devoted, most heart-broken of mothers.

Frank was certainly very much hurt by the news. He had always felt for Augusta's trying position, and had determined to promote the marriage with all his will, as soon as he was fairly settled at home.

Nest was sorrowful; she felt for Augusta, but her feelings of womanhood revolted against the step she had taken.

The Duchess was hurt, that Augusta had not consulted her; for she wisely said, sooner than take such a public, disgraceful step, she would have braved Lady Jane's anger, and had the marriage properly celebrated at Nairn.

The good little kind grandmother fidgetted, and tapped her stick about the room, in a pure state of ungovernable restlessness.

"I don't like Augusta, my dear," said she, addressing no one in particular, "I never did. But she should have been married from Myrtle

Grove. I wonder if she has any money. My dear, I am not ill-natured; I always wish to have a large heart. I shall send her some money, my dear, I shall say it is for her *trousseau.* Though she has run away, which is very shocking and foolish, she ought to have a *trousseau.* All brides have *trousseaux*, and therefore she should; and she will not the less want clothes because she ran away. She is very like her, very; but I bear no malice, I am a Christian. She is a proud young woman, very, but she ought to have a *trousseau.* My dear, I have a little money ready; I always keep a little, in case any one wants it. Now I am sure Augusta will. I don't like her, my dear, I never did; but as she wants money, I shall send her some to-morrow."

Mimi and the Duke both thought the news rather good than otherwise; she did not care much for her sister, but diverted herself with the notion of her mother's being out-witted.

He considered it a step that put an end to a very disagreeable business, in certainly a disagreeable way; but it put an end to it. Though Frank had not the slightest intention of pursuing his sister, he yet deemed it advisable to return home, which was anything but agreeable to most of the party.

And to none more so than their noble host and hostess. It was therefore agreed on all sides, and so carried nem. con., that the visit was to be finished the first favourable opportunity. The good little grandmother bespeaking them also, to pay a visit to her.

"Ah," said she (as she watched the carriage rolling out of sight, her delicate handkerchief constantly wiping the little dew-drop tears)—"I must be a happy old woman, though I cry, for I have now so many to love. My second Frank always loved me, and so did that child Mimi; but I did not love her much, she was so naughty and untidy. But I do now; I think her a nice

pretty little girl, and if it was not saying too much, she reminds me of myself, when I was a nice little girl, but more quiet and tidy than Mimi. And not boisterous, oh no, gentle! yes, very gentle; because, though I am not clever, or learned, or have any thing particularly good about me, I yet have a large heart, that feels for others, and would do nothing to hurt or wrong them. I am not revengeful, I hope, and I hope you think me free from malice, my dear Duchess."

The Duchess could hardly help smiling, as she looked at the little fairy old woman, in her silver grey dress, and gossamer lace cap, so fresh, so neat, so pretty, so small, and thought of malice and revenge at the same time.

"Utterly without it, I should say," said the Duchess, taking a little small hand in hers.

"Really I hardly know what to say," said the Duke; "remember how Nature always will plant high, aspiring, passionate, ambitious souls,

in the smallest bodies, while she gives to Patagonians the spirit of a mouse. According to that doctrine, my dear lady, you ought to be a Beelzebub in petticoats."

"Oh! fie, fie, my dear Duke; I shall really be quite enraged. Fie, fie! let us change the subject, let us talk of my Pearl."

"I am very much fascinated with her," said the Duchess; "for not only has she received a fine and noble spirit from the great Creator, but it has been thoroughly done justice to in her education. She possesses rare talent of various kinds, and yet is as modest and merry as a simple child amongst us. God grant that the lighting of such a sweet flower amongst us, may be for good; that one so highly gifted may be the means of lifting the heavy cloud that has hitherto hung over your head, dear Lady Gomer."

"I bear no malice, I don't wish to be wicked," said the weeping little simple grandmother.

"But that's what I feel; I had no power, I was too weak and foolish. I was driven like a straw by that proud spirit; I don't wish to be harsh, I would not be unkind, but though my heart was torn and racked, and my head ached to lie down in the dust, rather than see the misery of my soul's idol—I was powerless, I knew I was a midge, a mite, an atom. Though I had a load of love in my heart equal to mountains, I could not move my smallest finger to succour him I loved. Now she will do it; my Pearl has a resolute eye, she loves my second Frank; she is clever, but yet good; talented, yet forbearing; humble, yet proud,—proud of the good gifts God has given her. But she will show her pride by the manner in which she will use them. Yes, a good star is rising for Gomer. The evil that has pursued it is, I hope, about to be wiped away. I am a simple, silly old woman; but I see a great way, especially for those I love. I am a happy old woman, and I

thank God for it—more especially as now I am certain, when the angel of death comes for me, I shall, indeed, have no malice in my heart, I shall be too happy to remember by-gones."

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